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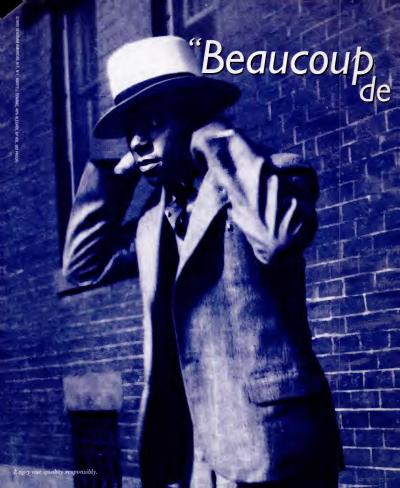
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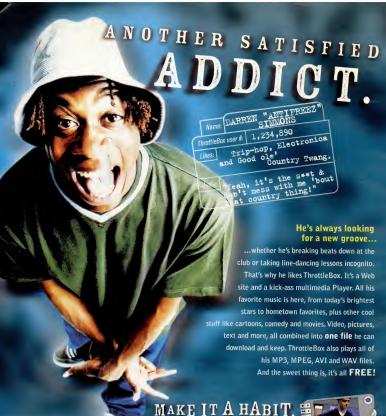












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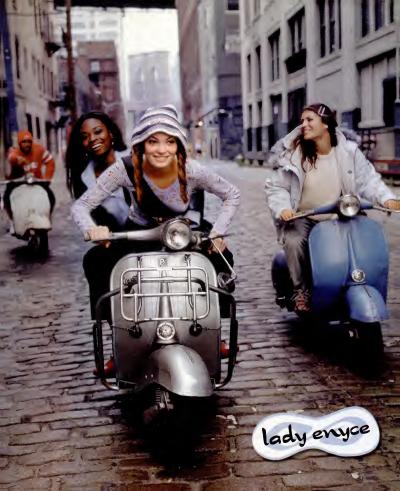








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FEATURES

NOVEMBER 1999 - VOLUME 7, NUMBER 9

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ON THE COVER: Chris Rock photographed exclusively for VIBE by Piotr Sixon; styling by Emil Wilbekins (for VIBE by Piotr Sixon; styling by Emil Wilbekins black have butten single-branel det still, whith excitor dress shirt, and burgundy lie, all by Cabin Kien; diamond studies by Tiffany & Co., ABOVE: Midnight suudos 2p-front jacket by Cabin Kien; Wilto pro-strettor T-shirt by Cabin Kien; white pro-strettor T-shirt by Cabin Kien.



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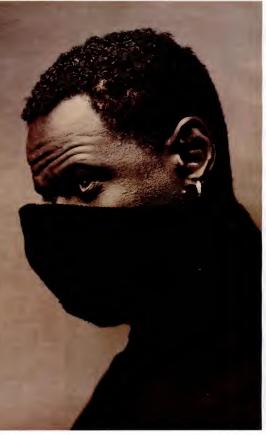
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PROPS: Three Niggas From Brooklyn. By Ali LeRoi



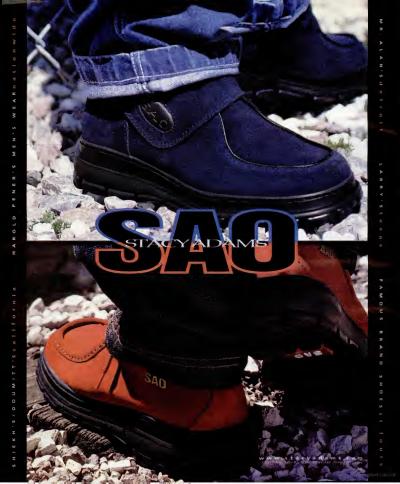
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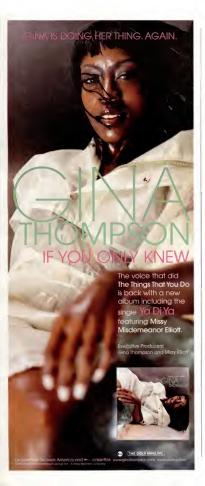
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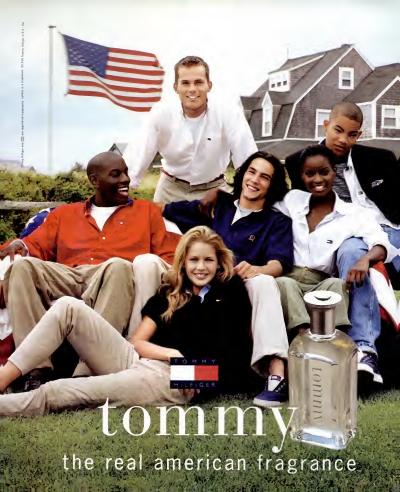
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WAIT. WHAT?

ONWARD, UPWARD

his is my last issue. I've been here since June 1934. Really Istarted in 1933, writing reviews and then features about, like, Black Sheep and MC Harmord Gang Starr. Remember the Wesley Snipes issue? That was my first VIBE cover story, my first national cover ever. When our former associate music editor Shani Saxon left last month, she said, "VIBE raised me." I second that emotion."

I came on staff as music editor, did that for two years, then went back to school for a while. Then on July 14, 1997, I was promoted to editor in chief of the best music magazine in the world. It's been a wondrous, sometimes scary, lesson-filled ride. I can't believe I've resigned—but a sister's got to make moves.

Of course, it's all about the people. Former VIBE EIC Alan Light, who's now head of Spin, hired me and taught ne well. Jesse Washington, former VIBE managing editor and former Blaze editor in chief, kept me same for my first year as HNIC. Sacha Jenkins, former VIBE music editor, is, as I've said too many times, the brother inever had. Biosoming serior editor David Bry makes me complete on some days, just by being Byr. Radyalyh Mays was a flawless assistant (and is flawless, period). Jessy Klein had the tough job of walking in Rady's shoes, but she did—and will keep on stepping toward big success. I've known Carter Harris isnect was 21. Wu sexto to party together in the Bay Area. He's been my toughest critic, the best editor. And what about Sarah Min? She's the rock, the river, and the bridge, Sarah came over here with her Glamourous ways and taushir the stiff I thought laterally knew.

And man do I miss our former art director Dwayne Shaw. Bob Newman is the bomb, no doubt, but Shaw, that's my boo. And George Pitts and Pyous and Meegan and Brandon and Lesile (I)—the support Vive gotten from the design and photo staff, the way they stay ahead of every other magazine on the planet, it makes me ory, for real, when I think about not seeing my people every day anymore. They strive for excellence. They've made he proud.

ve for excellence, I ney ve made me proud.

And the writers: the gifted Karen Reneé Good is my sister from down South.



boogle nights. Too many long nights at 215 Lexington. Fun, fear, fabulousness, freaking out. People moving up, people moving on.

Waitl I have thank yous, too: Quincy Jones, Bob Miller, Anne Welch, Raymond Walter O'Neal Jr., Gil Rogin, and John Rollins. Wendy Washington. Kevin Liles. Steve Stoute. Marvet Britto. Keith Clinkscales. Abe Peck. Carl Lamont Posev.

> Raquel Dionne Smith, Janelle and Reginald Jones. April Smith Jones. Karen Lewis. Canzata Castleberry. The Bay Area's own J.H. Tompkins. And the truest counselor known to mankind, L. Londell McMillan.

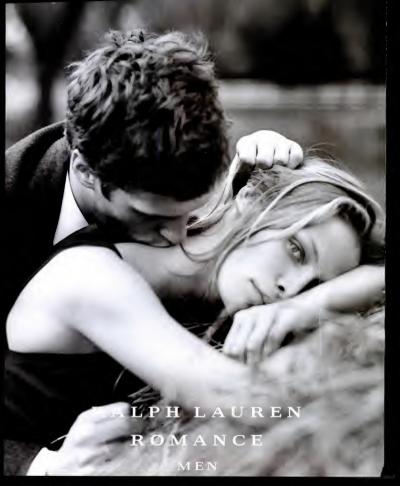
IT'S BEEN A WONDROUS, SOMETIMES SCARY, LESSON-FILLED RIDE. ICAN'T BELIEVE I'VE RESIGNED—BUT A SISTER'S GOTTO MAKE MOVES.

Harry Allen is the same as he was 10 years ago when Inet him: serious, sometimes silly, and the best interviewer around. Jeff Mao's an editor's dream come the. Ellibiot Wilson is stretching his imagination like I always hoped he would. Jeannine Amber, Rob Kenner, Kadi, Shaheem Reid, Mim' Valdés, Pete Reic, Leslie Granston, Andrew in research, Terri in copy—and I can't forget Ms. Minrya Oh. She's all flavor and firecness—pure ViBE. These people have helped me, have helped this magazine. Readers, if you could see us at work—it's not overly exciting, but it's like life! Thrills, drams, arguments. Loud music, laughs, and snaps. Eleance and calamity. "Volu and Filler's Chiles & Kettol Coord Crashbery. Too many Emil Willbekin is taking the wheef, folks, and he's about to drive this lovebug up into the stratosphere. This magazine already reflects a lot of Emil's tasts and his devotion. He's going to do an anazingib. I'm out, not the meat gig—writing stories over at Time, Inc. Of course I'm excited, scared, all that typical girl shit, but ready to blow up, just the same. There's no place like this place, though. Not one single crazy solace on this earli ke Ville:

See you all later.

I'm crying, readers, like a kid. But I'm happy.

DANYEL SMITH



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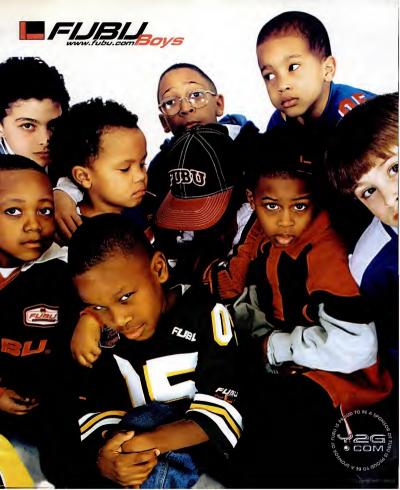
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THE GUEST LIST



Thave a real affinity for schmaltz," says Queens, N.Y., native Army Linker—"When Inteat Live Me in a Special Way's by DeBarge. Imbascably apuddie on the floor." Linden, 40, discussed the finer points of Once; White-amother op pomuse with RBS state Plant Nickright for "The Protessional" [page 134]. But the veteran VIBE some broken when the quality mustice to On Terrectifity to The Garbeit, Linden—who asing with New York-arters country are pure barrais in the "State", but the veteran VIBE shows of Some disable American soul. I said, 'Look you are African Black people. You cannot sing Teddy Pendergrass. I will sing "If You Don't Know Me by Now." I respectly our Califfon. but now you've listing about my culture.

"I think writing is something you discover about yourself," suys James Mannaham, 31, who sawkin Chirk Rock for this morth 4 NES C(1'h Rock We Trust," page 116). "It's like finding gum on your shoe." Back in 1982, when he was part-time designed ref 17 ho killiges Orice, Harnahama started writing reviews to make extra money. The sticky wad that he found on his treads has since turned a har accentumed "witing reviews. Starte, Start, and favor accentumed "witing reviews." But so good grad—still regrets his choice of studies. "Why yo to Yale and major in art?" ne says. "What he hell was tithning?"





"It yo is moot things that no one likes to shoot," says Milan's own Davide Cermuschi, who obtthis more? Welfarboin stort, "The Oppies" Inpage 1522, "Things that most people aren't able to see." A graduate of Italy's School of Fine Arts, Comuschi, 32, and short sergularly for Basar Iraly and a host of other Italian publications. But in 1987, when a photography assistant postion operad up in New York City, he took offer America to expand har artisch chrozom. "Photography is reflection of what is happening around us," says the soft-spoken shutterbug. "It's changing and developing every day, lysat open my yes and reinjo what is happening."

"Can tgo the cow without editing" That was Chris Rock is first reaction when we asked him to guest-edit this morth's issue. The Brooklyn, N.Y.-bom comedian, actor, and author, who claims to be age 18-34 (in accordance with WBE's demographic), says he letters to Tricky, Red Hot Chill Pappers, Oldsaft, and Trick Daddy when he relaxing at home. And even though he's made cames appearance on albumb by Method Man, Prince Paul, and Of Dirty Bastard, please don't expect to law thin spatificing his own rymease by the soon. Than en'or apper-type aspirations," says the Furk Doctor Rock. "To be hornbla at it. When Method Man starts crackings own joke, the sent listart papping."

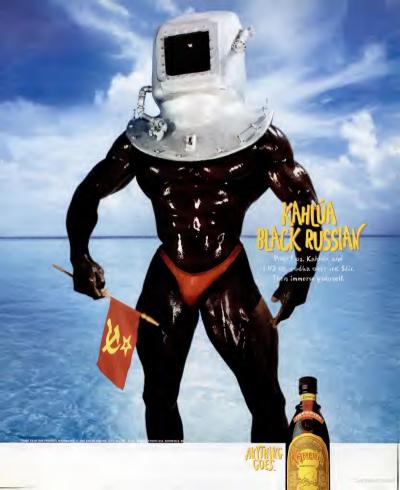


IN-HOUSE COUNSEL



"I wanted to be like Hulk Hogan when I was e kid," asys Queens homeboy and assistant make oding "Shakeme Reid", 23. Life did he know that e more cerebral career sily in store. In 1986, while the hip hop head ("My friends and I used to [le-y-y-hot D Brend Nublan anogal") was casually achig a mass communications class at "Virginia" is Norlois. State University, a professor noticed his latent and encouraged him to write for the school newspaper. After graduating in 1986, Reid landed as the mer intensifies but Wilk end quicily became an office tavortis. Since then, he s written VIBE Quickies on Andrew Dice Clay, Steve Martin, Ricky Willems, and Sarah Jessel Parker, end seg one from teachers and antilaterative east start to editoral essistent to his current position editing natural reviews and the elimprotrat Next section. To what does our chooledate by the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start of the start of the start of the start of the years of the start o

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IN REMEMBRANCE

WAITING FOR A MIRACLE

uly 8 was the last day anyone saw Joe Wood Jr. While ene fartending Unity' 09a, conference for minority journalists in Seattle, Wood, a book editorat The New Press in Manhattan, slipped away for some bird-watching on' Mount Rainier and disappeared. Ten days later, while the county was transfixed by the disappearance of John F. Kennedy Jr., Seattle's, National Park Services called off the search for Wood. The area where



search for Wood. I he area where he'd been hiking was covered in as much as 10 feet of snow, and the weather had turned rainy and cold. Park rangens said there was little chance that Wood abs survived. "It's very difficult to accept the fact that he's gone," says Somini Sengupta, a New York Town reporter and close friend of Wood. "It's hard forme to miss him because! I'm still having conversations with him every day."

Wood, 34, is one of the most sophisticated and provocative writers on race in America. A work on a memoir about the African. American family intile Blood in the Water as the time of his disappearance, he was one of VIBE's first contributors and the author of "Searching for Sp" [June Plu] 1994], a feature on Sly Stone. "Oes is this brilliant gay, "say VIBE features ceitor Jeannier Amber, who worked with Wood at The Village Voles, where he'd been a columnist and senior edition." Joe taught me that to be a good white you have to be fearless. You can't worry about what everybody is going to think. You just have to write you truth, even if if pisses people oft." Wood's failing, friends, and colleagues haven't given up hope. Weeks after his disappearance they're still stiting vigil, witing for a miracle. Our payees are with the grown and the stilling vigil, witing for a miracle. Our payees are with the stiffing vigil a wing for a miracle. Our payees are with the stiffing vigil a wing for a miracle. Our payees are with the stiffing vigil.

9

LESLEY LENORE PITTS July 7, 1966 - August 3, 1999

SAVIER

FOREVER SUNSHINE

On Tuesday, August 3, 1999.
Lealey Lancore Pitts variation to St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City for various symptoms. It was there that she passed away suddenly. Down-to-earth and with a witty sense of humor, Pitts was a publicity diva in no uncertain terms. But she was also known for her curious intellect and compassion. "She was like a sistert or me," says Shelia Jamison, a senior publicitat TINT. I They met al Qujiy bubbidist at TINT. I They met al Qujiy and they was the sister of the same and they are they are

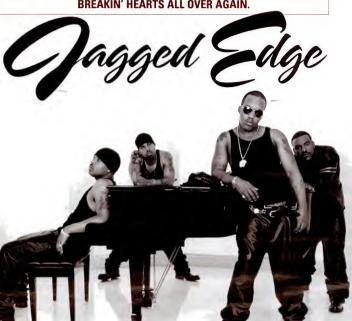
& Mather, where Pitts had her first public-relations job. "I could ask her anything from whom should we be voting for in 2000 to what kind of tampons to use." Born in Newark, Pitts graduated from the School of Visual Arts in New York

Born in Newark, Pitts graduated from the School of Visual Ants in New York City, In 11 years, he impressive publishic rater infudued vice presidencies at such record labels as Jive and Loose Cannon. In 1997, Lesley created No. Screaming Media and was soon serving clients as renowned and diverse as The Artist, Jay-Z., and UPN. "Leslie was brilliant," says Miguel Baguer, seino director of media at Columbia Records, who started out in 1991 as Pitr's intern and assistant as Set to Run Pablic Relations, where she was an account manager. "She was good at conveying his how to the maintenam," he says many control and the says and a second the story with his how to the maintenam." It was not as to overwise his how to the maintenam, "he say maintenam and the maintenam," he says maintenament and the maintenament in the maintenament. The says maintenament in the says of the says maintenament in the maintenament. The says maintenament in the say

We'll mis Fitts a great deal. Whether she was calling about ATribe Called Quest or Buju Banton or Nelson George, she always gave in our straight, not chaste. But freedance scribe Michael Gonzales is the one. At the time of Fitts's death, she and Gonzales had been a couple for eight year. They were soul master. 'She was serious fun. It could be an Elion John concert or hanging out in Central Park, he was down for whatever, 'Gonzales says. 'She encourgaged me to grow as a writer and to have confidence in myself.' Lesley Fitts will never be fornotten.



BREAKIN' HEARTS ALL OVER AGAIN.



The gentlemen who brought you Gotta Be off their GOLD debut album, "A Jagged Era" return with

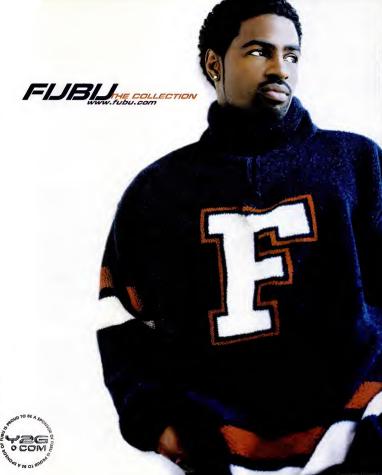
C. heartbreak Includes KEYS TO THE RANGE, HE CAN'T LOVE U.

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SPEAK EASY

BIGWILLIENICE

"I think I'm really nice, but Will Smith is even nicer than I am. You might say that he's the Michael Jordan of niceness."

-Jay Leno, host of The Tonight Show

"Can you think of any words that start with the letter 'n'? I can. The word 'nice' starts with the letter 'n'. Now, can you use the word 'nice' in a sentence? I can. Will Smith is a nice man."

-Big Bird on Sesame Street

"A lot of people say I'm nice, but I'm really a catty bitch. I just pretend to be nice, because that's what our sorry-ass viewers like to see in the morning. Will Smith, on the other hand, is the real deal. He's truly nice."

-Kathie Lee Gifford, cohost of Live With Regis and Kathie Lee

"There are three things you can count on in life: death, taxes, and Will Smith being really nice in the movies."

-Roger Ebert, movie critic

"One time when I was an LAPD officer, I pulled Will Smith over and I didn't know who he was. He just looked like a black guy, so I beat the hell out of him like I did any other black guy. And guess what? Afterward, he was still nice! I guess it's just part of his nature."

-Mark Fuhrman, former LAPD officer

"I used to be like Will Smith."

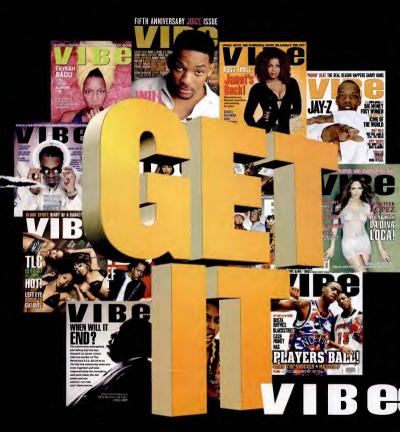
-O.J. Simpson

"Anger is destructive, and the destruction of your neighbor is the destruction of yourself. The way to inner peace is nonviolence, which is the manifestation of compassion—that is, a sense of caring or thinking about another's welfare. In other words, be nice like Will Smith."

-The Dalai Lama

"Thank you for calling, but neither my really nice husband nor I can come to the phone right now. Please leave a message."

-Jada Pinkett-Smith, on the family's answering machine



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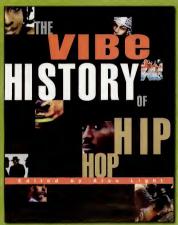
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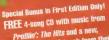
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The VIBE History of Hip Hop is the complete story of rap, from its start on the streets of the Bronx to its world-dominating status today. By the editors of VIBE-who gave you the New York Times bestseller Tupac Shakur-this book has it all.

The Forefathers:

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unreleased Run-DMC track from their upcoming album, Crown Royal

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OUEEN OF HEARTS

Thank you for a great September 1999 issue! As a proud, beautiful young woman of color, I rejoice in celebrating the beauty opened her heart up a little more, I'm feeling her all the way.

Stephanie Bowles Scotch Plains, NI

I really enjoyed your cover story on Mary J. Blige. She's a great singer and really cool. She seems nice too, though I don't think she's as nice as Will Smith. He's the nicest person ever. All of my friends think he's really nice too. I wonder what makes him so nice. He probably has really nice parents. Anyway, thank you, VIBE, for writing stories about nice people like Mary J. Blige and Will Smith.

Nate Oakley New York, NY



woman. No one can do it like she canno one ever has and no one ever will. Tiffany Ivory

Finally, a woman on the Juice cover! Much respect and congratulations go to Mary on all her accomplishments. God bless you always, Mary J. And VIBE, happy sixth anniversary! You thought I was going to

Bronx. NY

The labels you used to describe Mary I. Blige (divine, almighty) only belong to The Divine and Almighty, no one else. Hail Mary? I don't think so. To love her is one thing, but to worship her is totally different! Please, keep the creator of this woman in mind.

Mary's music speaks directly to the hearts and souls of all her fans. She's

gifted, beautiful, and down-to-earth.

No one can express love and pain in her voice the way the ultimate Oueen of

Hip Hop Soul can. Mary's power can't be denied. I'm the lucky and blessed fan who was chosen to meet Mary for

MTV's Fanatic. It was the greatest day of

Noble Monk North Brunswick, NI

"WHEN WE COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH A WORLD OF INCONSIDERATE, FAKE PEOPLE, IT'S A RELIEF TO THROW ON YOUR MARY J. RECORD AND BE TUNED IN TO WHAT'S REAL: REAL SINCERITY, REAL BEAUTY, REAL WOMANHOOD."

I'm Mary's No. 1 fan, and in my opinion

she's the best thing you could have done

for the sixth-anniversary Juice issue.

and progress of all women. I'm so glad to finally see a sister on the cover of VIBE looking fly without having to show her breasts, behind, or appear in her "drawers" (like Toni Braxton, Janet Jackson, Foxy Brown, Jennifer Lopez). When you're all that and you know it, you can be classy and not show all your assy. Go, Mary! Patrilla Utley Raleigh, NC

Why isn't Mary happier? In every article I"Miss Mary Mack," by Danvel Smith. September 1999] she seems so damn depressed, God, how much more do you need? You're the Queen of Hip Hop Soul! You're beautiful, talented well loved, and respected. Not all men are scrubs, and I wish you'd be more considerate of the men. who buy your music. Hell, y'all women play games just as much as we do, But I'm not going to turn this into a pigeons-scrubs battle. I'll just tell you to keep your head to the sky and keep singing those ghetto love ballads. I love ya, Mary J.!

Y-Roc Roberson Mihoaukee, WI

Your interview with Mary I. Blige simply blew my mind. VIBE has truly captured the essence of my idol. Everything about Mary's attitude and character is positive. For her to change her lifestyle is very commendable. She's definitely representing. Now that she's

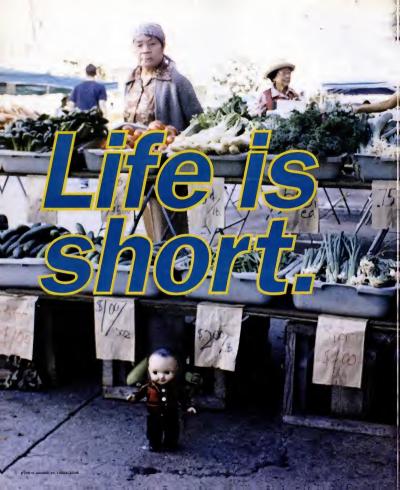
Reading the article made me even more attracted to the power of Mary. She's encountered so many hardships and still manages to be such a strong forget to give you your props? Never! Keep up the good work.

Iovce "Inice" Givens Paterson, NJ

my entire life. Sweet Mary will always be No. 1 with me, and so will you. VIBE, because you did such a beautiful job on your cover story with the one and only Mary J. Blige. Keep the info



YOUR BEST SHOT





Lee DUNGAREES

on Queen Mary coming!

Michelle Bachmeier Chicaro, IL

Mary J. is a true symbol of strong womanhood. She she let look he's able to look he's able to look he's able to look he's able to look he's what she sees. Mary has the kind and the what she sees had he look able to be respect for hereful that seems to be loot and in many of tooky's female R&B performers. Mary J. is an innovator of music, never compromising to sell receive inheart of office office with a work of office office office with a work of office office office office with a work of inconsiderate, cold, fake people it's a male turned in to what's real a real sincerity, real beauty, real womanhood.

Russ R. Nielser
**Russ R. Niel

Ryan S. Nebeker Phoenix, AZ

PRIVACY DI FASEI

Harry Allen desperately lacks interview skills ["Do You Believe in Magic?," September 1999]. Callously probing a person on when and from whom he contracted HIV is not only deeply uncaring, but frankly it's none of any-one's business. In lad to flip back to the magazine cover several times to make use I was reading VBE and not some insensitive gossip-infested tabloid. Magic Johnson is an amazing hoops legend and a brilliant black entrepressure who deserves more justice than a quette. I do believe in magic—I would have liked to see the disrespectful questioning in this interview disappear from VBE's pages.

C. Dinkins Brooklyn, NY

HOW MANY MCS? While reading your article on Freaky Tah ["Oueens Logic," by Greg Donaldson.

"Queens Logic," by Greg Donaldson, September 1999], tears of understanding and anger ran down my face. It's a damn shame we as blacks don't have any respect for one another like the older generation does. I just lost my favorite mephew due to hate, rage, and jealousy. Just like Tah, my nephew was true to his friends and family. My heart goes out to Tah's relatives and the LB fam. No one should experience the pain that is felt when a loved one is staken away. How my black people, but we need to flip the script and be proud and ready to live. not die!

Robin "Ro-Scola" Gough Baltimore, MD

I'm responding to your story about Raymond Rogers [Fleaty Tah]. I by my hat to him for keeping it real and staying in the hood after becoming a star. That makes him a top dog in my eyes. Living with his family, showing love for the streets, and helping kids is what put him at the top. We need more people like him trying to keep it real.

Michael Gittings New Haven, MI

FACE THE MUSIC

I'm a black female with several mixed-reca and Caucasian friends and when we det ["That Ol' Black Magic," by Rob Kenner, September 1999], all of two foundthe articte to be very racist. Kenner basically says that these white groups are well received because they do' black music. 'Music is music. These groups are making money because they for alterned. If they couldn't sing or dance, do you really think they would have made it this fai?

Shakia Ware Dayton, OH

I've never read any article in your magazine quite like "That Ol' Black Magic." That black producers, promoters, managers, and songwriters give a jump start to white acts that plagiarize what blacks originated is notable. But glorifying it and making it a major article will cost VIBE a whole lot of artistic credibility. What Johnny Wright and others are doing is a sacrilege. I have nothing against acts such as George Michael and Jamiroquai that are inspired by black music, because they bring something creative and impressive to the music world. Unfortunately, that isn't the case with Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync. and Britney Spears. Furthermore, I don't give black artists such as 702, Usher, Dru Hill, and the entire Bad Boy roster any more credit than the ones featured in this article. They just don't piss me off as much. All of these performers are just average people making average music for easily satisfied people who aren't sexy and appealing enough to do what they do. Ev Da Cle

Mount Vernon, NY

MAIL

TAKIN' ME HIGHER

Can you fedit? Lifeds soso good. That, my friends, is the feeling of Carlos Santana's strings. Music that's not only sensual and spiritual but also real. Articles like "Swamp Thing" by Greg Tate [September 1999] are the main reason Ilook forward to my VIBE each month. Utterly stupendous! Keep up the excellent work. Oooh, feel those vibes...groovy, man!

Talesha Strickland Norcross, GA

YOU WANT MORE?

One thing that really pisses me off about VBBE: All you guys ever write about is music. I mean, damn, is that all you assholes at VBE ever think about, music? Seems like every time I buy this damn magazine, there's some shit in it about music. Popular Mechanics doesn't do that. Underground Tattoos doesn't do that.

The Late Lionel Stanwych
VIBE

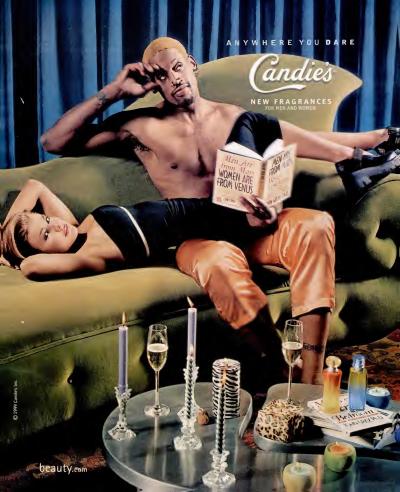
TRUE ROYALTY

In response to your question about whether Michael Jackson can retain his throne as King of Pop (20 Ouestions, September 1999] with the release of his new album, my response is a resounding ves. lackson came by the title King of Pop the old-fashioned way: He earned it. He's one of those few individuals who genuinely qualify for the title of living legend. Trite as it may sound (but then the simplest of truths often do), he's not just for our time he's for all time Michael lackson's impact, not simply on black and "crossover" culture but on the culture of the late 20th century, is so immense that it will only truly be appreciated when he's gone. Let's allow the maestro to do his work. Let's welcome Michael Jackson back. Let's demonstrate, before it's too late, that we understand and respect his place in the history of entertainment. He's giving us one

last shot; let's not mess it up.

Robin Meltzer Essex, U.K.





ABOVE THE REST

I'd like to say to Miss Christina Aguilera, I respect your choice on being a positive role model [Next, "Mind Over Body," by Larry Flick, September 1999]. If more people were like you, this world would be a much happier place. You're a young woman with her mind set right. If neonle doubt you now, they'll wish they'd said nice things when you're blowing up the charts. I wish Christina Aguilera the best in her very promising career.

Kule Neal Truxton, NY

LET ME FIND OUT How do we know that all these so-called letters to VIBE aren't just made up? I mean, we have no proof other than the letter-writer's name and city. If we're to believe

be on A Different World. Not Jasmine Guy, but that short girl from that Eddie Murphy movie when he was the fat dude. Y'all know. Anyway, he's sexy. Y'all shoulda nut him in it



INQUIRING MINDS

1. If Monica marries C-Murder, will she name herself

'CALLOUSLY PROBING A PERSON ON WHEN AND FROM WHOM HE CONTRACTED HIV IS NOT ONLY UNCARING. BUT FRANKLY IT'S NONE OF ANYONE'S BUSINESS."

that these letters are authentic, we should get more complete information at the end of the letter.

REALAPPEAL

Name and address withheld

M-Murder? 2. Doesn't Rah Digga look like Trina (from Trick

Daddy's video "Nann Nigga")?

3. Doesn't Master P get more popular every time someone disses him? 4. When will Chuck D just give it up?

5. Isn't it pathetic that Backstreet Boys can sell more records than K-Ci and lolo?

6. And for that matter, Britney Spears more than Lauryn

7. Didn't Mase really retire because he got tired of people talking about him? 8. Doesn't comedian Steve Harvey look like Mr. Pota-

to Head? 9. Don't you wish they'd put old Martin episodes back

on TV? 10. When is Terror Squad gonna tell Big Pun, "Man, that ain't sexy, you need to lose weight"?

I'm tired of reading articles like "Can't a Brother Get No Love?" [by Jeannine Amber, August 1999], written by black folks who complain about how Hollywood continues to dis black actors and actresses both on the big screen and on television. Amber's article was excellent and right on target, but it's time that the black entertainment cognoscenti take action. I'm talking about the Oprah Winfreys, Bill Cosbys, Spike Lees, and Ouincy Ioneses. These talented and visionary people have the juice to out together a black studio similar to what Steven Spielberg did with David Geffen and leffrey Katzenberg at DreamWorks SKG. There's more than

WHEN WILL SOMEONE THICK GRACE YOUR COVER? IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE OKAY WITH PUTTING ANY SIZE MAN ON THE COVER. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO WOMEN. IF THEY CAN'T BE HALF-NAKED THEN THEY DON'T EXIST."

Miami, FL

enough black talent in front of and behind the camera to make this a successful business venture. Later for this ignorant, racist Hollywood shit. Let's do it ourselves. Hollywood executives will be shaking in their boots at the kind of talent coming out of a black studio. Chucky Byrd

How y'all gonna write an article about sexy black men in the movies and leave off the brother who used to play the guy on The Cosby Show? Not the new one, the one with the kids. You know...not the son or that guy who played Roach...the other one, Cousin Pam's friend. He was in that movie with what's-her-name. She used to 11. What happened to Craig Mack? 12. And shouldn't he be begging Puff Daddy for his

iob back? 13. Don't we watch MTV just to see fine Ananda Lewis?

14. How old is Babyface? 15. Isn't the whole Wayans family wack at TV and movie

comedy? 16. If Billboard can have an awards show, shouldn't VIBE

have one too? 17. Don't you wish you could hear that old AMG song "Bitch Better Have My Money"?

18. When will Mystikal get his hair braided differently? 19. Shouldn't Monica have her own TV show instead of Brandy?



20. Don't you think around this time next year Cash Money Records won't be around?

Derrick C. Chicago, IL

knowledge about music, artists, clothing, etc. I'm going to college soon to major in TV broadcasting and music engineering, and whenever I want info

PHITTIN' IT DOWN I'm responding to a point made by a

reader in Rye, N.Y. [Letters, Septem-

"MISS CHRISTINA AGUILERA, I RESPECT YOUR CHOICE ON BEING A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL, IF PEOPLE DOUBT YOU NOW. THEY'LL WISH THEY'D SAID NICE THINGS WHEN YOU'RE BLOWING UP THE CHARTS."

ber 1999] She asked why New York rappers are trying to sound like southern rappers. I'm a born and semi-raised New Yorker and have spent a lot of time in North Carolina. I'm a big fan of southern acts such as Goodie MOh. OutKast, and Master P. but I don't like East Coast rappers changing their styles because southern rap is popular right now. New Yorkers are a special breed. We have a unique flavor (see Mobb Deep, Noreaga, and M.O.P.). We should stick to our own style.

Donnell Suggs Brooklyn, NY

Stop the madness! It's getting out of control with so-called "fans" playa hatin' artists. And for what? These artists had dreams and the talent to do something about those dreams. They made it work. But in order to keep it working, you've got to change with the times. If you don't like it. don't listen to it. It's that simple. Are they still getting paid? Yes. So obviously it doesn't matter what you think. So drop it! Lighten up, people. It's entertainment

> Chris Adams Winchester VA

PROPS OVER HERE

You're doing a great job with the Boom Shots column [by Rob Kenner]. You not only keep us up-to-date with the hotrest dancehall, but you also let us know who appears on the riddims as well as the tunes. Thank you for that, Malik Gillette Collins NY

VIBE is the bomb! I recently became a subscriber and I can't wait to get my next issue. VIBE is filled with mad on anything, I turn to VIBE. Good lookin' out! Anthony Rodriguez

Miami FI

SIZE MATTERS

I love your mag. You offer the latest on fashion and music. But how about being the first to do something brandnew? Show a little meat! Lots of people like women (and men) over a size 10. When will someone thick grace your cover? It seems like you're okay with putting any size and type of man on the cover, but when it comes to women, if they can't be half-naked then they don't exist.

Mahogany King Baltimore, MD

CORRECTIONS

. In the September 1999 feature "2001: Vibe Odyssey," Dawn M. Baskerville should have been credited as the writer of "Unbe-

The photograph of Sereh Jeesica Parker in the October 1999 Quickle, "Sexuel Vanille," wee photographed by Brigitte Lacombe, not Andrew Eccles.

WRITE TO VIBE

ViBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIRF MAIL 215 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10016 (include your deytime phone number). Or send e-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returne

Buying ice at the mini-mart.



Listening to Hot Boy\$

Buying ice at the jewelry mart.

Life is what happens while you're listening to music.











Feeturing: Get Bone





quariem q: If You Love Me







na: If I Could Fore Back The Rands Of Time



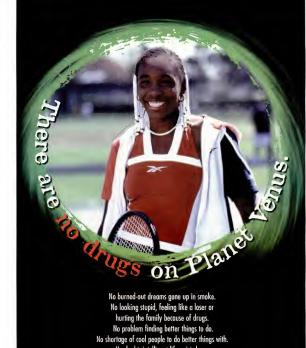


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BRUTALLY HONEST, LIKE IT OR NOT



his is a weird issue for everyone involved. For the first time, VIBE, has allowed an outside hand to grab hold of editorial content and make the final cuts and changes. It's a trust exercise, really, like letting yourself fall backward into your friend's arms. So here we go, trusting a good number of our precious pages to the talent, wit, and wisdom of our friend, the great American comedian, actor, author, and musical artist ("We low champagne!") Chris Rock.

Sometimes, though, when you're doing that trust exercise, your friend steps aside and lets you fall right on your ass. You might even bang your head against a rock and splir your skull pens. So for safety reasons, as well as ethical, moral, and legal ones, we have set up a little key to let you, the reader, know exactly who is responsible for exactly what is in this magazine.

When you see this face: at the end of a story, it means that our special guest editor has had his special guest fingers all up in this particular piece. (VIBE takes no responsibility for the material that lies therein. We refuse to be held accountable. Go ask Chris.) However, if you do not see that face at the end of a story, it means that our special guest editor's special guest fingers had nothing to do whatsoever with that particular piece. (Chris Rock takes no responsibility for the material that lies therein. He refuses to be held accountable. Go ask VIBE.)

But this doesn't mean VIBE and Chris Rock don't trust each other. It doesn't mean we're not friends. In fact, this issue is a lot like one of those *bilarious* episodes of that *Friends* show on TV. But with some black people.

**David Bry



MO' BILLS? NO PROB 84 / STINK OVER SKID MARKS 86 / NIPSEY RUSSELL DOES
THE HUSTLE 88 / SAMPLIN' ANNIE 89 / DAWN USED TO BE IN EN VOGUE 100

GAME RECOGNIZE GAME

hen you're a music-loving pro athlete with a bulging bank account, starting your own record label is a logical venture. Shaquille O'Neal did it with T.W.I.S.M., as have boxers Evander Holyfield (Real Deal Records) and Roy Jones Jr. (Body Head Entertainment). But not every athlete tackles the music game with equal commitment. As Bob Whitfield, Atlanta Falcons offensive lineman and CFO of PatchWerk Recordings puts it, "You have to distinguish between the athletes who use their names to float a label, and the CEOs. Do you think [Sony president] Tommy Mottola gives a damn that you were all-pro? This is about selling records "

In early autumn, Chicago White Sox star slugger Frank "The Big Hunt" Thomas is too busy with his day job to talk about Un-D-Nyable Entertainment, his Chicago-based label. "During the baseball season, Frank's role in the company is minimal," says June Mhoon, Un-D-



Nyable's director of operations. "Offseason he spends most of his time at the studio where the artists are recording." Asked if the R&B flavored Un-D-Nyable is profitable, Mhoon employs an appropriate sports metaphor. "The label is in deep left center field. No hits vet."

The Falcons' Whitfield has had considerably more success. Four years after he and childhood friend Ras Kass graduated from Banning High School in California, Ras became PatchWerk's first signee. In 1994, his single "Remain AnonymouS" blew up. A licensing deal



with Priority Records gave Whitfield the momentum to build the PatchWerk Recording Studio in Atlanta. Since 1995, the studio has recorded and/or mixed more than 20gold and platinum albums, including portions of OutKast's ATLiens and Goodie MOb's Still Standing.

For the label-owning pro, downtime has its up side. "The NBA lockout [of page-99] gave me time to put the label together," says Derrick Coleman, Chalotte Homets star and CEO of 44 Ways Entertainment. 44 Ways' first release is World of Madness, the July debut from



Born Suspicious, a Detroit rap duo featuring Coleman's cousin APX. Mean-while, former Detroit Piston John Salley has Ujamma/Total Records. In May, the label dropped South Bound, the debut from Atlanta-area rap duo Mozae.

"John and I have talked about the simitries in our-endeavors," Coleman says. But while he's banging for the Hornets, the retired Salley can focus on his label. But Coleman knows those days are coming. "You can't dribble a basketball forever," he says. "My career as a label owner is just beginning."

HOW TO PAY YOUR BILLS, BILLS

Money management tips for today's discerning girl group

Big ups to Destiny's Child. "Billis, Bills' is a hugehit 1 can't wait for their follow-up, "My Momma Needs a Microwew." Still, it sounds like these talented sistas need financial guidance. We'd hate to see Destiny's Child fall ofly at because they're teld up to bankruptcy court. (Have we learned nothing from TLC7) So VIBE consulted renovemed financial advisor Phillip B. Bonds, who kindly provided the following lyrical analysis.

"Can you pay my bills?" If the problem is that Destiny's Child are too busy to



consider using www.paymybills.com. If the ladies are computer literate, that is. "Can you pay my telephone bill?" If the

problem is a lack of funds, may I point out that AT&T, MCI, and Sprint all offer very competitive rates. Shop around for a plan that best suits your needs. Try 10-10-321.

"Do you pay my automo bill?" A big money saver right here: There's no such thing as an "automo." You're being billed for something that doesn't exist. Cease payment immediately and consult the Better Business Bureau. Also, contact you" automo" company and cancel your "inshumts."

BONUS TIPS: Try growing your own hair. With a weave, maintenance will cost a bundle. Even Oprah Winfrey uses her own hair, and she can afford a weave. Also, instead of leather suits, opt for a more affordable fabric like spander. However, if watching your budget lan't for you, there is a solution. Increase your incomes

Get a second job. Wanda Sykes

HARD KNOCK NEWS

REVIEWER GETS KNOCKED HARD

On August 13, at approximately 11:37 p.m., writer George Tate was allegedly assaulted by members of the group Three Niggas From Brooklyn, reportably after the group caught wind of a scathing review Tate had penned of TN-B's debut album, Nigga Shif (Ig'nent Records). Reached for comment at his Manhattan office, Tate said, "What, I'm not supposed to do my job? I can't



help it if that's what they chose to record. [The album] is what it is."

Witnesses claim TNFB members NiggaWhat, NiggaRace (pronounced nigga-RAH-thl, as in the late, great sequined-gown wearing planist, Liberace) blind-sided Tate as he left Andre Harrell's "I Got Some New Shoes" party held at Justin's, the upscale N.Y.C. eatery owned by Sean "Puffy" Combs. TNFB hit Combs. TNFB hit weather than the search of the search of

Tate with a full two-liter bottle of Fresca, then kicked, punched, and cursed the scribe as he lay on the sidewalk. Witnesses reported hearing NiggaWhat scream at Tate, "What do you think of our record now, bitch!?"

Pages to TNFB's many beepers went unanswered. While his legal counsel reports that a lawsuit is pending, Tate, who was treated for a bruised spleen, said, "We cool now. It's over. I just want to get back to work."

Ali Le

JERRICK COLEMAN GLEN JAMES; FRANK THOMAS: ROM VESELYCHICAGO WHITE SON; BOB WHITFILD" COURTESY OF ATLANTA FALCONS; JEKINY'S CHILD JIM MALNICHOUTINE, CHRIS ROCK; POTTE SIKONA, THREE NOGUS, FROM BRODOK,TM AND GEORGE TATE, MAGDALEMA, CAR



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"SCORCHER" FACES **EARLY RE-TIREME**

Tire's colored treads spark debate

as it a premonition that caused Wyclef, on his 1997 cut "Apocalypse," to rhyme "U-turn / My tires burn / My concern..."? This August, BFGoodrich introduced the "Scorcher." a line of performance radials whose rubber treads, striped in "screaming vellow," "raging red," and "blazing blue," leave colored skid marks on the pavement. Concerned California officials responded by calling on BFGoodrich to discontinue production of the Scorcher line.

On August 6. San Francisco supervisor Mabel Teng introduced legislation to stop Scorcher sales, saying that Bloods and Crips members "will use the red and blue skid marks to...insult rival gangs." Dennis Finnegan, Undersheriff of the Marin County, Calif., Sheriff's Department, agrees. "BFGoodrich has created a product with the intention of encouraging people to lay rubber," he says, "Our [concern] is gangs...people lose their lives for defacing other people's [turf]."

In Los Angeles, where the dangers of blue-red gang rivalry are more widespread, both the L.A. County Sherriff's Department and Priority Records star Mack to (who has rapped, "Should I bang with the red / Should I truce with the blue") refused

to comment on the Scorcher controversy. "I don't think this product can be associated with gang activity any more than the color of a car or a shirt or paint can be," says Lisa McAllister, BFGoodrich public relations manager. "[The Scorcher was designed to be the ultimate finishing touch for the custom-car enthusiast."

chief of staff Matt Lonner. "[It's like] Krylon advertising spray paint by showing how to paint graffiti on a building." In response to such criticisms, BFGoodrich did remove from Scorcher promotional materials a video that showed a car leaving colored skid marks. McAllister points out, however, that "that was done on white pavement. On asphalt, the marks

"[The Scorcher] advocates the defacewould be ment of public property," insists Teng's very faint."

The debate may be moot if the tires don't catch on. Scorchers run \$200 per single 16-inch tire. compared to \$110-\$120 for a normal performance radial. Says Mark Maynard. Wheels editor of the San Diego Union-Tribune: "Burning rubber is only a thrill until you have to replace a set of tires." Knox Robinson

ON THIS DAY IN HIP HOP August 19, 1993 by Chris Rock



arrison Ford was king of the box office with The Fugitive (Warner Bros.). UB40 had Billboard's No. 1 pop song with "Can't Help Failing in Love." The Bridges of Madison County (Warner) topped The New York Times best-seiler list. And Russell Jones, a.k.a. Of Dirty Bastard, was not under arrest. For a period of at least 24 hours, the Wu-Tang rapper didn't break a single law. On this historical day in hip hop, Ol' Dirty (who has since made a name for himself by getting arrested in rapid succession on an increasingly bizarre array of

charges) waiked the streets a free man. People rejoiced in Harlem. Even New York City Mayor David Dinkins got into the act by proclaiming August 19 Oi' Dirty Bastard Not Arrested Today Day.

INSIDE PITCHES The Wide World of Sports, Wide Open

On November 7, from 4-6 p.m. (ET), NBC is scheduled to air StarSkates Ice Jam, with worldclass figure skaters

Katarina Witt, Elvis Stojko, and Surya Bonaly (pictured) performing to simultaneous live performances from En Vogue (a party of three) and Ben Vereen.... The artist formerly known as MC Hammer (a onetime scout for the Oakland A's) is currently working as a pregame commentator for the San Francisco 49ers' flagship radio station, 810 KGO Newstalk AM Nascar drivers Terry Labonte and Derrike Cope have dismissed their motor-coach drivers following a July incident where one of the drivers wore a sheet over his head like a Ku Klux Klansman and confronted a

black coach driver "There is

crossed, joking or other-

a line that cannot be

wise," said Kevin Triplett, Nascar's director of operations.... www.ballparks.com.... The Minnesota Timberwolves (Kevin Garnett, Terrell Brandon)

and the Sacramento Kings (Chris Webber, Jason Williams) will travel to Japan to start their 1999-2000 NBA regular season with games at the

Tokyo Dome on November 6 and 7. televised on TBS.... Pee Wee Reese (1918-1999) Superlative shortstop and captain of the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1940-56. When in 1947 Jackie Robinson broke major league baseball's color barrier as the league's first black player, Reese, a white southerner. displayed affection and support for his teammate in the face of verbal abuse from fans and

fellow ballplayers. Rest in

peace, Pee Wee.

SLANGUISTICS

Like lightning bugs on a summer night, hip hopsterisms pop in and pop out before you can get a fix on their location, grab them, put them in a jar with holes, and squish them into green slime. Still, VIBE invited me to be this month's special guest columnist, and darn if I won't give it the old college try to keep you up to snuff. Lance Crouther

Twenty-three skides: Don't know Stow your man: The dictionary pro-

Vo-dee-o-dee-yo-do: Don't know what this means either Daddy-o An escaped junatic or a piece of fruit. (I'm just quessing.)

Coasse: You got me. Cat's more. Something to do with a cat. Hencal Something to do with cats.

Wisennaimer: Lost.

vided no help.

A play on words. o turkey. Something to do with jive. See you later, alligator. Don't have

After a while, crocedile: If people can make up words. I have the right to not understand what they mean. Terris: Bitch: ho.

HERR HUNDREDS OF YOUR STYDENIE BRITISS ON MD. VISIT YOUR LOCAL MUSIC RETRILER AND CHECK OUT MUMISC SONYMUSIC.COM/MINIDISC THE SONY MINIDISC HIGH SPEED DECK IS A FASTER WAY TO DIGITALLY RECORD YOUR COS TO MOS. MAKE A MIX

THE RESOLUTE BEST WAY TO RECORD YOUR MUSIC."

CHECK

he Nipsey Russell I know is the live-talking Tin Man from the 1978 movie The Wiz (Universal). with Michael Jackson and Diana Ross Then there were Nipsey's seemingly never-ending appearances back in the day on Hollywood Squares. But there's a Nipsey I didn't know-the man Ed McMahon dubbed "The Poet Laureate of Television," who's done everything from daytime soaps As the World Turns and Search for Tomorrow to quest snots on Chris Rock's HRO show, My man definitely understands music too-his first gig as an entertainer was as a tap and rhythm dancer in The Ragamuffins of Rhythm in the late 1930s. My suggestion is that Nipsey do some toothpaste commercials-I've never seen anyone over 40 with whiter teeth and a more heartwarming smile.

Original cast of The Wiz-Torns (Atlantic, 1975)

N: The rhythm goes. You can still pon on the four, but the rhythm is syncopated. What's the tune?

B: "Tornado." from The Wiz.

N: I was in that! The tunes I recognize are "Fase on Down the Boad." "What Would I Do if I Could Feel?," and "You Can't Win." Michael's song. And. of course, "Home" from Diana Ross. What you're going for there is a musical purpose. You're telling a story. Listening to it out of context, you wouldn't necessarily relate it to a storm, but it's a good melody and a good beat. Quincy Jones was the musical director for [The Wizl. He said, "Let's give it a city feeling. Not the plains of Kansas, but New York City." The phrase he used was "urban stylization."

Buck Clayton-"All the Cate Join in" (Columbia, 1956)

N: Buck Clayton, He goes all the way back to the Count Basie band when they had the million-dollar rhythm section with Jo Jones and Walter Page. B: Did you see them perform live?

N: I worked with them on the road for years. One of the great jobs I got was working at Basin Street East with Count Basie's band, Joe Williams, and Sarah Vaughn, Swing was such a dynamic form. With the bombastic feeling that

BOBBITO PLAYS THE TRACKS. NIPSEY RUSSELL STATES THE FACTS.

was around during the war, it had to be big and aggressive sounding, obscur-Ing your sadness

B: it provides sociological and political context

N: And that's what I see in music now. Rappers speaking to the social situation of today-Screw the police, Kill this, Move that-a little protest, a lot of ego. To a guy like myself from a couple generations ago, sometimes we don't hear it as clearly as the young ears (who arel trained to hear it. Ran became a threat to the "establishment " but kids all over the world were listening to it. I vanity because he uses my name in it. but even if that were not so. I can still hear the lyrics very clearly, so I can enjoy it. The first rappers were the Sugarhill Gang, and then the next big record I heard was Will Smith's "Par-

- ents Just Don't Understand." B: Nine years later
- N: Good times come, bad times oo. time is on the wing. But long as we have musical vibes, life is gonna swing. B. Vou wrote that?
- N: It just came to me now! It was only a nightmare, it was only a dream but it tortured me all through the night...six

naval" (Verve, 1959)

N: Music transcends geography. I used to wonder if American artists who went abroad would be understood. After I heard Cella Cruz Leaid I don't understand what she's saving, but it's conking

B: This is a ballad from the film Black Orpheus (Lopert, 1959).

N: What you've played has been music from different eras. Each form, when it appears on the musical scene, seems wrong. A flatted fifth chord-you hear It in all modern jazz-et first it seems awkward, but now you hear it in com-



was in Singapore, and I saw little boys with the homeboy pants cut off and the hats turned back, so I said, This message is getting somewhere!

Nice & Smooth-"No Bones in Ice Cream" (Fresh, 1990)

[Greg Nice comes in rhyming, "Nipsey Russell / Do the Hustle!" Nipsev joyfully claps his hands.1

N: Of course [this record] feeds my

women were fighting to make love with me, and the uply broad was winning the fight! Don't put the baby on the water bed, it could be very grim; you will never know if he's wetting the bed, or if the bed is wetting him!

B: You're a consummate entertainer! Antonio Carlos Jobim and Luiz

Bontá-soundtrack for the movie Black Orpheus, "Manha de Carmercials because the human ear has become accustomed to a new harmonic structure. Rap music, same thing. As the rappers continue, they refine their technique, and instead of just boomboomboom they come with a better rhythmic pattern, in 2020 the klds will have something to supercede rap. Each generation goes to a new pleteeu

B: That's beautiful.

"Hard-Knock" Lyrics, Written to Last

n April 21, 1977, Annie opened on Broadway. In the first scene, set in December 1933 at The New York City Municipal Orphanage, a curly haired moppet named Annie and her fellow orphans are being forced to scrub floors at four in the morning. To pass the time they sing "It's the Hard-Knock Life." a sone written by composer Charles Strouse and lyricist Martin Charnin: "It's the hard-knock life for us! / It's the hard-knock life for us! / 'Steada treated / We get tricked! / 'Steada kisses / We get kicked!" More than 20 years later, those lines were sampled by producer DI Mark the 45 King from his old vinyl copy of Annie: The Original Cast Recording and used as the chorus in Jay-Z's massive 1998 hit "Hard Knock Life (The Chetto Anthem) "

"'Hard Knock Life' was done at first without my knowledge, and then it was sent to me to get permission," says composer Charnin. "If the request had come

without the song, I don't think I would have done it. Saving you want to make a 'ehetto anthem' is unspecific. It had to be demonstrated instead of just talked about "

As lay-Z writes in the liner notes for Vol. 2... Hard Knock Life (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam. 1998): "If you notice the chorus. they're not singing like [they're] sad, [they're] singing like, 'Yo, it's a hard knock life,' just letting people know. It's a beautiful thing."

Annie, the most performed American musical ever, has made more than \$480 million. So Charnin is cautious about letting people touch the music. "[But] here was a serious rap artist with a point to make," he says. "The fact that [Annie and Jay-Z] lived parallel lives that met was exciting." Orphan Annie-type tribulations are reflected in ligga-penned "Hard Knock Life" lines like "I don't know how to sleep / I gotta eat." And just as Jay-Z winds up "driving some of the



hottest cars New York has ever seen," Annie eventually is adopted by billionaire businessman Daddy Warbucks.

So how much of Jay-Z's "money cash" did Charnin walk away with? "Between \$25,000 and \$50,000 for the initial use." he says, plus a per-unit rovalty rate that Charnin deems "standard." So if we guestimate at about 5 cents per unit for the 5 million copies of Vol. 2... Hard Knock Life sold, that would be a cool quarter of a million dollars? Charnin chuckles: "I think Jay-Z made a lot too." Iacob Orles

WHO'S THE HARDEST ROCK OF THEM ALL?

Ever since little man David slingshotted a rock between the eyes of biblical bad guy for those who remain petrified of any projectile bigger than a pebble, VIBE has devised

Gollath, compact masses of Igneous matter have been accorded special status. But a geologically illogical classification system that 'll rock you like e humicane, G.



CHRIS ROCK (Real name: Net X) The similarity between this Rock's name and Christian Rock. the '80s hair metel subgenre led by spandex-clad Stryper, is particularly unfortunate considering that Christian Rock is funnier to



CHUBB ROCK (Real name: Richard Simpson) Welghing in at more than 250 pounds, the hip hop Berry White tops the "bigger and boulder category. Gets honus points for his 1992 tribute to the Town of Bedrock, "Yabadabadoo."



(Real name Adam Horovitz) Boy's famous claims "I'm e cheech wizard." ronl," and "I'm gone" suggest his mok has powers of matter transmogrification.



RACHMANINOV Sergei Vasilivevich Rechmaninov) Born 1873, this Russian pianist was only 20 when Tchaikovsky commended his opera Aleko: laterused hypnotism to boost his selfconfidence; mar ried his first



PETROCK The ideal compenion for hours of rejection-free heavy petting. Cen be very cold at times and tends to break windows when hogusia



KIDROCK (Real name: Bobby Ritchie) Detroit native typifies the phrase "Leave no stoneruntumed had huge success with "Baw itdabe" during the Neanderth summer of '99 when mck music's collective intelligence dropped like e



PETEROCK Real name: Peter Phillips) Sampled "Long Red" by '70s rock giants Mountain on Mecca and the Soul Brother (Elektra/Asylum, 1992). (Incidentally, bearded Mountain bassist Leslie West Is even bigger than Chubb Rock)

THE HEBREW ISRAELITES
September 17, 1999, Times Square Traffic Island, New York City
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRE LAMBERTSON

ahoud Hakeem Omar, member of the infamous crew of strident bleck nationalist rabble-rousers, the Hebrew isreelites, stalks the stage as the crowd falls into a hush. But it only takes two words from his megaphone to throw the throng into a frenzy: "Read, brother!" With that, the Hebrew israelites' long-awaited We

Hate the White Man Tour is under way. On cue, a Bible-toting, scripture-quoting hype men kicks e ruckus-bringing version of "The Twelve Original Hebrew Tribes." Segueing into "God Damn White Devil," the israelites "teer the roof off" Times Square in what is quite possibly the most incendiery performence ever held on a Disney-owned

property. An elderly Caucasian man waiks by on his way to a matinee performance of The Lion King, his small, flaxen-haired granddaughter in tow. They're visibly shaken.
Once again, the original mad rappers
ere gnewing at the fleshy core of the Big
Apple. Act like you know.

All LeRo Ali LeRoi

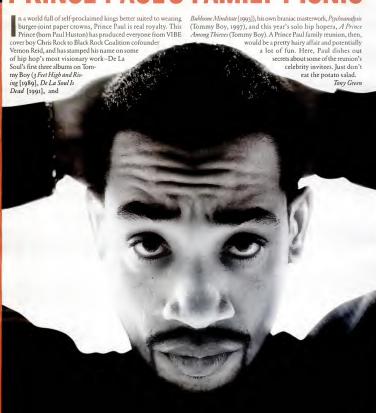




It's all about the beer.



PRINCE PAUL'S FAMILY PICNIC



3RD BASS



Reunion activity: nutting knockwarst back on the grill egain

Pault "I met 3rd Bass et the Rush [Artist] Management offices in 1989, right after 3 Feet High and Rising [came out]. They told me, 'Make us e record like [De La's] 'Buddy." So I gave them 'Gas Fece' and 'Brooklyn-Queens' [1989]."

BIG DADDY KANE Family role: brothers with e



Family role: sister's nogood husband Reunion activity: organizing

a game of strip spades Paul: (Produced Kane's "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now" end "It's a Big Deddy Thing" [1989].) "In New Orleans, everybody was checking for Kane. He comes out of his room in e bathrobe with embroidered initiels end slippers, two glasses of chempagne, just walking through the hotel like it was nothing."



Family role: cool cousins who moved away

Reunion activity: compleining shout the music Paul: (Wes e member of Stetsasonic on On Fire [Tommy Boy,1986], In Full Gear [Tommy Boy, 1988], and Blood, Sweat and No Tears [Tommy Boy, 1991].)"I met them in Brooklyn in 1984. Everybody was wearing leather, spiked collars, and studs. They pointed at me end said, 'That's him!' I was like, Oh shit, they're going to kick my ass!"



Family role: family enforcers (the ones you call to get your sister's baby daddy to pay child support Reunion activity: bogerting the desserts

Paul: (Alias "The Undertaker" is e member of Gravediggaz on 6 Feet Deep [Gee Street, 1994] and The Pick, the Sickle, and the Shovel [Gee Street, 1997].) "Fruitkwan used to sew clothes. All of the group were reelly sensitive guys. I guess you have to be if you make clothes."



Family role: neighborhood kids who practically live in your rec room Reunion activity: playing mah-jongg

Paul: "People think of De La as this Daisy Age thing, but the day we got signed to Tommy Boy some white kids were fighting end we were watching. They velled at us, 'What the fuck are vou looking at?' De La just jumped in and started kicking their asses. I was like, 'Please, we just signed e recording contract!"

GEORGE CLINTON



Family role: family petriarch Reunion activity: throwing magic mushrooms in the juicer Paul: "They asked me to remix his song 'Tweekin'' off The Cinderella Theory [Peisley Park/Warner Bros., 1989]. I was speechless. I hed never been starstruck in my life. But I was then. I met him and he was like, "I like you. You're silly.' I was like, Man, George Clinton thinks I'm silly-cooff



Family role: the second cousin who gets all your jokes Reunion activity: handing out brochures for Handsome Boy Modeling School (see page 199) Paul: "As pert of my Psychoanalysis act, I would bring people onstage and ask weird sexual questions. So it was him end a girl onstege, and I turn around to find him and he's gone. I asked where he went and was told, 'He's gone with thet girl.' So I guess Psychoanalysis worked for him.



Family role: white sheep of the family Reunion activity looking for the "engel in the centerfold"

Paul: "Yeah, I met Peanut Butter Wolf on the Deep Concentration tour. Oh, you mean Peter Wolf [from J. Gells Bandl? He wanted me to remix his song '99 Worlds' [1990]. I was not familiar with his music et ell. I think he heted the remix."



Family role: cat who everyone claims "must be from your side of the family" on activity: offering to

show you his pet shark Paul: (Had Kool Kelth play the role of arms dealer Crazy Lou on A Prince Among Thieves.) "I remember Keith kicking it to this woman outside a club. He was esking her whet she did. She said she worked for Magic Johnson. And he seid, 'Yeah? Well, I build satellites."



Family role: half brother whom no one can tackle Reunion activities offering Zaxxon gaming tips

Paul: (Produced the Biz-Chubb Rock cut "No Rubber, No Backstage Pass" [1996].) "He would come to my high school in Amityville, [N.Y.] and hang out in the lunchroom. Biz can tell some serious lies. One time he paged Big Daddy Kane and told him that Luther Vendross esked to borrow his rope chain."









Family role: the sister who used to school you on the basketball court Reunion activity: preeching the importance of a balanced stock portfolio Paul: "I met her in 1986. She wes so young she wes weer-

ing Mickey Mouse sneakers. She bought me a bagel end some orenge juice. That was the only compensation I got for [producing] 'MC Lyte Likes Swingin' (1988)."





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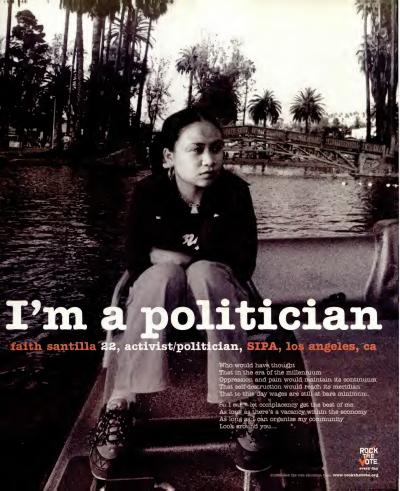
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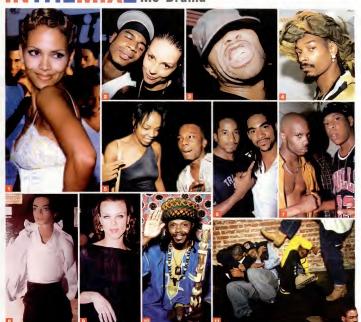
The geng e ell here: Note moss, Lenny Kravitx, stelle McCartney, Putt Daddy, and producer monty Hoss get their grub on at Dave, the French version of Mr. Chow

The Paris haute couture shows used to be strictly about aristocrats, ladies who lunch, and Hollywood starlets. Fast-forward to 1999, and they've turned into the coolest of "underground" paries. One

night, supermodel Kate Moss, rock star Lenny Kravitz, Chloe designer Stella McCartney, and Sean "Puffy" Combs all gave the City of Light a run for its francs. From Puff Daddy's Sean John bash to Donatella Versace's party for Madonna to style maven André Leon Talley's runway reports for ABC to the hot hip hop night at Les Bains Douches, Paris is definitely burning again.







1. Halle Berry reminds us of what real hollywood glamour looks like at the preminer of her HBO flick, Introducing, Ocordy Deardridge, in N Y.C. 2, what ever line Hitman Stevies J. Is throwin, it sum doesn't seem like hot 97 DJ-ette Anglie Martinez is bitin'. The two get their groove on at Funkmaster Flex's birthday party at New York City's Cuture Club. 3. Method Man, the master of disguise, introduces his versate of disguise, introduces his ver-

sion of the Gas Face at the New York premiere of In Too Deep. 4. Whether it's Shirley Temple curls or a mob hat, Snoop Dogg fears no fashlon risk. He tries on an Iny Supersonic feather hat at N.Y.C.'s Millennium Broadway hotol. S. Rah Digga gets an earful of Ras Kaas's fiercest flows at the Mecca fashion show held at 27 Standard in New York. 6. Separated at birth? O-Tip onits out his strong resemblance to

Enyce head honcho Tony Shellman at the Enyce fashion show in N.Y.C. 7, If you can't stand the heat, get out of the Apolio Theated Especially when Jay-2 and DMX join forces for the Apolio 3 A Hot Night in Harlem concert. 8, is this real, or is it Mattel? Michael Jackson fulfilish his lifeting wish for immortality with his European limited-edition, voice-activated 0.10. 9, Independent film beauty Debi old. 9, Independent film beauty Debi

Mazzı giveslovely new meaning to the term "ce gidi" at the Ir Too Deep premiere. 10. Reggae star Luciano gives New York's Central Park Summer-Stage the royal treatment all twave. 11. Payback is a bitch when renegade rap group Three Niggas From Brooklyn get a critical beatdown from unnamed VIBE journalist at N.Y.C. club the Tunnel. Salem Slide Box 17 mg, "tar", 1,1 mg, nicotine ay, per cigarente by FTC method.

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SALEM Step Inside

DOMEPIECE FREESTYLE, NO REHEARSAL

New Day Dawning DAWN ROBINSON as told to Ragivah Mays

En Vogue has the status befitting a classic act, and for good reason. The female quartet, commanding in voice and ravishing in appearance, dropped three of the early '90s' best-loved albums: Born to Sing (Atlantic, 1990), 1992's breakthrough Funky Divas (East West), featuring "Free Your Mind" and "My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It), " and 1993's Runaway Love (EastWest). Then in early '07. Dawn Robinson, whose voice VIBE once compared to "a wet tongue licking the inside of your ear," left the group. At the time, Elektra CEO Sylvia Rhone, the woman often credited with masterminding En Vogue's success, told VIBE she felt Robinson's absence wouldn't be detrimental to the group. While Terry Ellis. Maxine Jones, and Cindy Herron maintained a public profile with 1997's EV3 (East West),

Robinson, save for an appearance on the cut "Firm Biz" from Dr. Dre's The Firm (Aftermath/Interscope, 1997), seemingly disappeared. Here, she talks about her departure from En Voque, forming Lucy Pearl with Raphael Saadia and A Tribe Called Quest's Ali-Shabeed Muhammad, and why. at last. things look all good in Ms. Robinson's neighborhood.

knew I wanted to sing from a young age. I remember when Minnie Riperton passed away, I was about 11. My mother brought her record home. Hitting those notes, I knew not everybody can do this. In the 'hood, you don't have money to get voice lessons. If you're trying to develop your voice, you go from Stephanie Mills, who [goes the] lowest as far as [vocal] range, all the way through Chaka Khan and Natalie Cole, up to Minnie Riperton.

I moved [from New London, Conn., to Oakland] when I was 13. At 14, I was in a band, Sharing Profit, with Raphael Saadiq-his real name is Ray Wiggins-and Dwayne, his brother. We would see each other over the years. And when Tony Toni Toné formed, [En Vogue was] just getting together (under) a different name. For You, This was 1989

[The members of En Vogue] met at an audition. We had a great time, growing and learning together. Terry was a comedian. Cindy was very hyper. Maxine was the mother of the group. I was the youngest. We had no idea that "Hold On" was going to blow up. I didn't even like "Hold On." "Don't Let Go" [from the 1996 soundtrack for the movie Set It Off (Asylum/Elektra)] was my favorite.

When [A Tribe Called Quest] dropped that song ["Oh My God," 1993] with Phife's line "Used to have a crush on Dawn from En Vogue / It's not like honey dip would wanna get with me..." I wasn't embarrassed! When I finally met him, he was so shy, "Oh my God, not Dawn!" He couldn't even shake my hand. He was down on his knees. I was like. "All that talk for nothing."

Within a group you can't show your personal side. [But] on "Don't Let Go," I really stepped out, singing lead. Maxine wanted to sing lead on [1997's] "Right Direction." She was like, "Come hear my vocals!" We ran downstairs and listened, and I held her hand because it was so great. That's the kind of support that we should have had [for each other] the whole time.

The next album was just about done: we had maybe two more tracks to finish. We had a creative meeting with Elektra. When I got there, the attorneys were there and I thought, If this is a creative meeting, what are the attorneys doing here? Maxine's

sitting to my right, and I'm like, "Max, what's going on?" And she doesn't look up at me. That's when they presented me with this contract. Sign this contract and commit for two years, or you're out of the group. I panicked because I didn't have representation with me. My hands were sweating, I couldn't breathe, Sylvia [Rhone] kept saving, "Well, when are you going to give me an answer?"

And I said, "I can't answer you until I talk to God. Nine years I've been

in this group, and you want me to make a decision like this in a moment?

"We had no idea that 'Hold On' was going to blow up. I didn't even like 'Hold On.' Don't Let Go' was my favorite."

On a Monday we had that meeting. I went to a fitting on Thursday for the album cover. I was the first one there. I'm in clothes and I feel really good. My manager called me and said, "Dawn, you have to leave. The girls don't want you there."

Dr. Dre came not too long after that. He was like, "Let me sign you (to Aftermath)," Dre wanted an artist like me, but I don't think he knew what it took to do an album of my caliber. He kept saying, "Just give me two more months." I said, "Dre, I gotta go. It's been a year. If I had this kind of time, I would have stayed in En Vogue."

I left En Vogue in 1997. I haven't talked to Maxine since. I miss her a lot. The last time I talked to them they were asking me back, and I was not having it. [It] would be like moving back home with my

mother. I'm grateful to be free, because artists usually don't get out of contracts. It's modern-day slavery. Every dime you make goes to [the label]. We were not making the kind of money that we should have been making for a group of our caliber. We didn't make \$1 million apiece in nine years.

The fans love En Vogue, I love En Vogue. We might do a reunion album, once I feel my heart is in the right place. Lucy Pearl is not something that I had in mind, but I feel good about the group because it's a stepping stone. It's R&B, but we have Ali-Shaheed Muhammad, [so there's] some hip hop. And when Raphael plays guitar he's very alternative, so there's rock. Raphael is hilarious. I laugh every day that I'm with him. And Ali is calm:

he doesn't put his Muslim beliefs on anybody. I see a lot of strength in both of them. My ultimate goal is to be one of the largest female acts ever. To be

Dawn, Janet, Madonna, Madonna, Janet, Dawn. D

dia circa 1994



"It was either static or my girlfriend pretending there was static—either way there's a problem."

It's about time somebody cleared things up around here.

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EVERYTHING You Wanted to Know BEFORE You're Supposed to Know It

s autumn's leaves turn from aphid yellow to septic-tank brown (thank you, global warming), our thoughts fall upon love and what a bitch it can be. Yes, VC is, as the Dayton Family said, "going through a thang," but we certainly aren't the only ones. Rumor has it that two of our most elegant lovebirds may now be on opposite sides of the nest, Lauryn Hill had been tearin' up stages across the country on the second leg of her Miseducation tour with her baby daddy, Rohan Mariey, by her side, but according to one of our sources, Ro recently stopped traveling with her, leading some to wonder whether their love is on the rocks. And as VC sips \$1,300-a-bottle Remy Martin Louis XIII on the rocks (truthfully, we'd rather Riunite, but we wouldn't want Quincy Jones to think VC's a slouch), we understand Roban's dilemma: It must be so hard to be the man when your woman is Da WoMan. But the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Lauryn Hill were together at a recent awards show in L.A. (a tawdry affair that VC won't deign to name) has VC hopeful that they're working things out, because VC loves Lauryn, and VC especially loves how Lauryn always manages to accept awards graciously while subtly dissing the hypocrites who give them to her.

Blind Item Break No. 1: What bandanna-wearing rapper from Queens, N.Y., was rumored to have been relieved of his very ostentatious jewelry at a Fat Burger franchise in Los Angeles around the time of the aforementioned cursed awards show? (Hint: It ain't the same

guy in Blind Item No. 2.)

Speaking of hypocrites, it seems that Puffy and his girlfriend (baby mother No. 2) Kim Porter have broken up. Again? Yes. For good? For now, VC wonders whether Jenny Lopez's trophy for winning this tug-ofman-of-war (a battle of endurance for sure) may very well be a big fat P-Diddy diamond sparkler. One of VC's sistas even reported that Puff gave Jenny LoLo a blank check and told her to go hogwild at the nearest Jacob the Jeweler slop trough, (Who knew that a piece of paper could ever beat the thrill of a Tiffany robin's-eggblue box?) Blind Item Break No. 2:

What handanna-wearing rapper from Queens gets roasted by young rap lion 50 Cent on a sone from his new album. Power of the Dollar (Trackmasters/Columbia)? (Big hint: It ain't the same guy in Blind VC to give you even more dish on hip hop coupling. It seems that Elise Neal (from The Hughleys and that Aretha Franklin "A Rose Is Still a Rose" video) and her boo, director F. Gary Gray (Friday. The Negotiator) are engaged, while singer Tamia and her baller. Grant Hill, tied the knot in Michigan. One of VC's top lieutenants also reports that blond bombshell Eve was committing hot and heavy PDA with hunky beats man

Stevie J. And Ed Lover has broken up with New York radio station Hot 97 FM to reunite with

his ex Dr. Dre on Los Angeles station 92.3 FM The Beat. (Watch out for those exes, ladies!) But this is all off the

Item No. 1.) Speaking of boss hogs and gettin' hitched, permit record, strictly on the QT, and of course, very hush-hush. THE HOTLIST VC is more than a gossip column, it's a lifestyle.

VC APPLATIOS PARTY INVITE INGENUITY

Dear readers, it's no secret that VC's social dance card stays maxed out with a packed lineup of power lunches. gala launches, baller brunches, dances and drinks and hears-oh my. But with so many publicists dving to get a piece of the VC pie (and a very ijggable pie it is), it's no wonder that our office Barcalounger groans under

the stacks of event invitations and personal pleas. So how does The Little Soiree That Could get noticed? Well,

first-time bedfellow) it's all about the packaging. And you best believe VC is inclined to RSVP "Nay" to played-out vellum invites but "Yay" to inventive efforts like the embossed leather poo-up for Timbaland's birthday party or the star-stud-

kiddies, in life (particular-

ly when impressing a

ded videotaped invitation to Puffy's birthday bash (both ideas from Icon Lifestyle Marketing). The young upstarts at Plugged In Public Relations get kudos for producing both the chicest invite (a printed Chinese fan requesting our presence at Funkmaster Flex's Southampton soiree) and funniest invite (a Group customized

Home sampler in which comedy creeps The Jerky Boys prank-called VC 's very own voice mail!). Our new fave? The Britto Agency, with their FUBU Y2G St Martin/St. Maarten getaway Invite: a real coconut that unzipped to reveal sand, seashells, lip balm, and a faux passport addressed to "The Beautiful One," That's us!





THEVIBESPOT



From the runways of Houston to Lot 61 and B. Smith's in Manhattan, this month's VIBESpot is all about style!

- 1. Who said it doesn't feel good to be on top? Not John Rollins (I), group publisher, Emil Wilbekin (c), editor-inchief, and Sean "Puffy" Combs seen here enjoying VIBE Magazine's 6th Anniversary celebration.
- 2. Mary J. Blige was the guest of honor at the 6th Anniversary celebration, as someone who has graced many a Vibe cover throughout the growth of the magazine as well as her career. She is pictured here with (I-r) Jay Boberg, president, MCA Records; Emil Wilbekin; Robert Miller, president

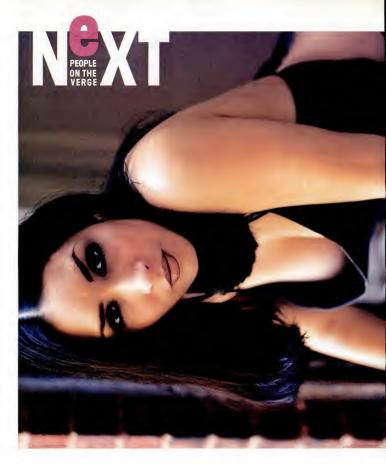
and CEO, Miller Publishing Group; Kirk Burrowes, her manager; and sister LaTanya.

- 3. Emil and Mary J. escape from the hype of the evening to smile for the camera.
- 4. It was obvious that (ir) Tom Thomas; Perry Fair; att director, Durrell Communications; Robin Glabon, advertising director; Lisa Fister, serior at director, Zpatori, Daryl Mabne, account manager, Burrell Communications; Joe Plana, director of apecial events, Bacard-Marini USA; Carlos Rhos, assistant marketing manager, Bacard-Martini USA; and Fred Jakscon, marketing manager were out just to have a good than and eying the music, flashion, and Bacard and eying the music, flashion, and Bacard
- As always, Biz Markie rocked the house on the 1 and 2's at the Bacardi Limón Style Show in Houston, Texas.
- 6. The models at the Bacardi Limon Style Show

did their thang. Need we say more....

- Famed Verve violinist Regina Carter brought down the house at B. Smith's in Manhattan for Absolut Harlem: The White Linen Affair, a celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Harlem Week.
- 8. (I-r) Robin Gibson, Ronnie Greene, vp print media group head, and Raul, both of Mediacom, enjoy a wonderful evening of jazz.
- 9. After an excellent performance, Verve jazz planist Eir Reed (Ord from Iell) takes a moment with (+) manager Mary Ann Topper; Mike Charlasch, vp of strategic marketing, Verve Music Ciroup, Villiam Jackson, assistant state manager, Seagrama Americas; Theodora Kuslan, marketing manager, Verve Music Group; and William Smith, state general manager, Seagrama Americas.







ELSIE MUNIZ Hot girl photograph by Jonathan Mannion

y family's summer vecation was "getting under the

fire hydrant for half an hour until the cops came," says

Fire nycram to man as the back-in-the-day antics."We never had money to go anywhere."

Mufiz, who recently paid for her parents and four siblings to go to Chando's Walt Disney Word. has come o long way to go to Chando's Walt Disney Word. has come of long way from froilecking on the sweltering streets of Philadelphia. Doing double duty as a spokesmodel (for Willie Esco) and as University Music's newest songstress, she's getting her first taste of what it's like to have e little dinero.

"I got accepted to Philadelphia's University of the Arts twice, but I couldn't afford to attend," she says. "Growing

Well, Muñiz hasn't wasted a second. Her sizzling self-titled sebut, produced by talents as varied as Jon Secada and Timaland, fuses her Latin and hip hop influences with ease. "I vas raised in a traditional Latin family, but we lived in an allviack neighborhood," says the Puerto Rican pecan. "I war ny album to reflect everything I grew up with." ter of money and timing."

up poor, you learn to expect downfalls. [Success] is a mat-

That eround-the-way flavor is a big part of the singer's appeal, You relate to her as someone from your block, someone who shares your experiences. Muniz shines brightly in the company of labelmates Mya and Terry Dex-

tor on "Fooled by the Mooh," a ballad laced with Spanish guitars. Then there's her leadoff single, the mid-tempo grinder "Your Eyes" ("Tus Ojos"). The song's video showcases Muñiz's silky voice and voluptuous body, and has men of sil nationalities sailvating,

"They're 34D and they're reat," says the scorcher of her ample physique. But make no mistake, unkinkir wants to be recognized for her music, not her curves. "People expect me to weer a tight dress with a flower in my hair," scoffs the denim-clad songbird. "I'm not going to do that. I'm a militant Letinel" Pump your fist in the eir, Eisle-just as Lofa Ogunnaike long you keep us dancing.







RAH DIGGA Rhymes galore PHOTOGRAPH BY PIOTR SIKORA

petite, caramel-hued woman lets her just-pedicured feet dry at an upscale Manhattan salon. You'd never suspect that this woman, hair pushed back. dragging tightly on a Newport, is the same sweet thing who held her own with the equally gruff-voiced Busta Rhymes on songs like "Against All Odds."

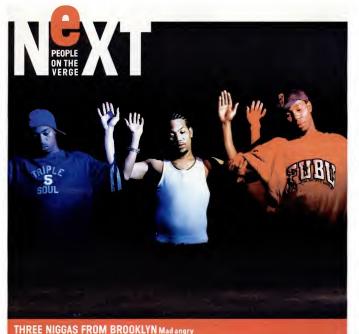
When I meet people on the road, they're usually like, 'Damn, we thought you were gonna come in here with a sweatpant leg rolled up and cornrows." says Rashia "Rah Digga" Fisher as she pops into a cab. She's jetting to Soundtrack Studios, where she'll finish her beauteous Elektra solo debut, Dirty Harriet.

After one sample of Rah's abrasive lyrics, It's easy to understand why the 27-year-old Newark native is often mistaken for Mr. Fisher, But according to Bah. it runs in the family. "As pretty as all the females in my family are, we all have mad deep volces," she says. Her uniqueness isn't limited to tone and inflection; her supreme word-weaving has everyone checking for the havoc she'll cause on her forthcoming album. Who can front on lines like "Hotter than a region in Ghana / Get loot like that Trump bitch Ivana" (from Rah's first single, the Mr. Walt-produced "Tight")? Other standout Harrief cuts like her untitled duet with Mary J. Blige and the Pete Rock-crafted "What They Call Me" will leave no question that Rah is hip hop's bionic woman verbalist.

Rah Digga's rise wasn't instantaneous, though. She spent years paying dues by ravaging underground demos with her clique, the Outsidaz (notable crew members include Eminem and Young Zee, the father of Rah's daughter). After brief associations with Das EFX (the "Digga" half of her alias was derived from Das's "diggety"-laden flow), Q-Tip, and the Fugees, Rah literally struck gold: She was invited by Busta Rhymes to join his Flipmode Squad in 1997. (Their 1998 album, The Imperial [Elektra], went gold.)

But as Rah explains, she easily could have missed her chance to shine. "Before we met, Busta placed a call to me one night when I was pregnant," she remembers. "I didn't believe it was him. I was like, 'I'm pregnant and I'm trying to sleep,' then hung up on him." Luckily, Busta wasn't too sensitive. Sacha Jenkins





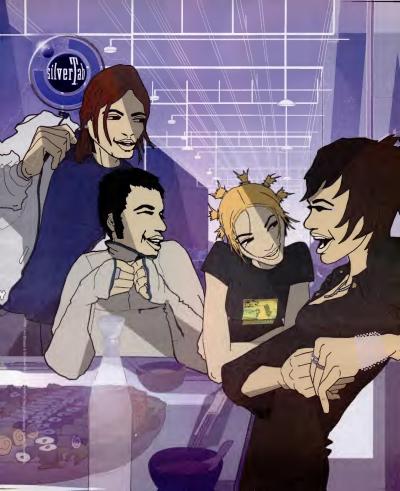
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MAGDALENA CARIS AUGUST 19, 1999, CHELSEA, NEW YORK CITY

Reliting down the off-ramp of the Brooklyn didge toward Fort Greens, a lime-green through the world for the control of the Brooklyn didge toward Fort Greens, a lime-green that wheel and I'm scared. What started out as a regular interview ellipsed off the heazy after my subjects, the utraviolent rap proup Three Niggas-From Brooklyn, polished off a two-liter bottle of Diet Sprite mixed with Hennessey, got into the backens, and immediately drive years on each other. "I'm talling you," says NiggaWho, the group's Diet of the Sprite Mixed Whole of the Sprite Whole of

The group's britism embar, NiggeRase (pre-nounced nage FAH-chi), is on his celly. Even though he's not in the argument, he's indiscrien-nately waving his pistol back and forth. "Shut the sucky, he shouts." A motherfucker can't even talk up in this bloth." It's no wonder he can't hear. Blaring at a vol-ume far exceeding that recommended by the American Association for the fared of Hearing is the group's new single. "He's Higgs (You Better the's now had he's he's he's he's he's he's he's higgs from Brocklyn vere discovered last aumen event hey lived to capitack Syvas-old rap-music impresanto Ralph Thatcher as he

was idling at a stoplight in his Benz. "These boys, they have chutzpahl" said Thatcher, who admits to being put off at first by the group's attempt to said bline instead of the said that the said the s

to being put off at first by the group's attempt to the him. Instead of calling the police. Thatcher phoned his nephew Seth, an intern at Manhattan's lighten Records. A chadlo session was quickly set up, and the rest, as they say, is history. Rolling down Flatbush Avenue, NilgaeWhat tops me on the head and asks, "How you like our long, yor! The state until I self the fively being the control of the state of the state



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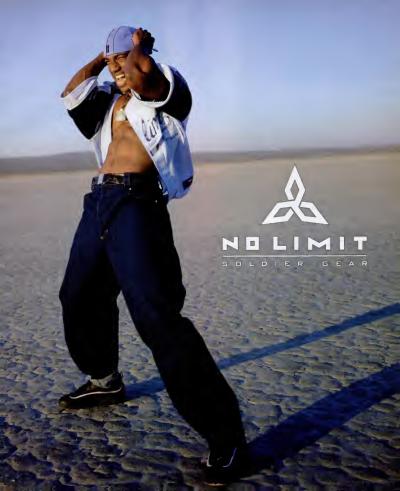


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Wife murderers? Not funny. High school serial killers? Not funny. Pig's feet? Definitely not funny. Tell that to CHRIS ROCK. The scrawny high school dropout from Brooklyn has risen to the top of his game by going where few comedians dare to tread. James Hannaham rolls with the Rock.



After meeting this impostor, it's reassuring to see Rock peep around the corner. He's even skinnier than in his pictures, his designer clothes hanging off him as if they were still on the rack. "We've been waiting for you," he remarks,

though it's only five minutes after the scheduled interview time.

show was canceled.

Rock walks into his office, a modest cream-colored room overlooking Manhattan's 43rd Street that the comedian has turned into a Woody Allen shrine. There are several framed Allen movie posters and a photograph Rock took with his hero for an *Esquire*

spread. On the far wall, above an olive sofa, is a poster from the movie Boss Nigger (Dimension, 1975), featuring a crude painting of badass Fred Williamson, gun in hand, looming over a (presumably white) Western town. 'I think every black man who site boss of anything should have this poster in his office," Bock announced.

It's clear why Rock identifies with this image. If, as Harvard W.E. B. Du Bois Professor of Humanities and Afro-American Studies Chairman Henry Louise Gates Jr. has said, a black man is a paradox, Chris Rock is the paradigm of paradoxes—a black sand-up care ful to elt us know he's playing to a black audience even as he skewers us. At the same time, Rock has gained a tremendous following among whites, becoming the

"Bosn Nigger" of comedy's prainie settlement. The Brooklyn, Ny-'-bred comedian, son of Rose, a reacher, and Julius Rock, a truck driver who died in 1989, spent the 1990–93 season of NBC's Satturdan Night Lieu overshadowed by Eddie Murphy, the guy who discovered him. Despite creating a few memorable characters, like militant talk-show host Nat X, Rock was like a fish out of water on SNL. He was under pressure to outdo his mentor and longed to be part of the black comedy renaissance that was in full swing over at Fox (which had recently launched sitcoms Matrin, Liming Single, and Row! So in late '39, Rock hightailed it over to Fox's In Living Color (1990–94). But before he could make his mark the For two lean years, Rock worked like a findt. He hither road, Jhunging back into the touring circuit of Bits black comedians. But when rival comedian Martin Lawrence upstaged him one night in Chicago, Rock knew he had to change his game. For inspiration, he looked to humor legends as diverse as Mons Mabley, Sam Kinison, Steve Martin, and Richard Pypor-to-whom Rock in now medlessly compared. He rediscovered his voice, spoke his mind, and hasn't shut ur since.

While roles like Pookie, the crackhead in New Jack City (Warner Bros., 1991), and Jheri-curled gangsta rapper Albert in CB4 (Universal, 1993) brough him moderate fame, it wasn't until his 1996 HBO special that Rock blew sky-high. In Bring the Pain, which won

SCRAPBOOK: WE SHOWED CHRIS THESE PHOTOS AND ALL WE GOT WERE THESE LOUSY CAPTIONS



That's me [left], my brother Andre, and my dad after he won the "Best Shiny Belt Buckle" contest. He came in first; won 10 bucks. Now we can afford a lamp shade.



You know, before I got this spaceship, no girls would ever talk to me. Now I'm the mack of the year.



See, I'm all serious [center] because I've started school, and I'm getting my ass whupped. Before, I was all smiles and shit. Look at mel The pain—it was horrible!

ON PARTYOUGHAUSE STITMS BY BILL WIDSENH AND JILL TOPUL PON CALESTING, DROOMING BY BY LIMPASSE, SHOES BY WALTER STEIDER, CHOKKE AND EARHINGS BOTH BY JIMMY CHYSTAL, BACK, BLACK, TOBE DRESS WITH PINK'S LOWERS BY LE CHATEAU, BHOES BY WALTER REGIEN, CHYSTAL TE

two Emmy Awards and was made into a comedy ablum, Radl With the New (DreamWorks, 1997), Rock made clear that no one was safe from hissilver bullets of racial and sexual politics. He ridiculed O.J. Simpson but had no respect for the dead, either, "You've got to think about O.J."s situation," he joked, "Päynig Nicolig 1825,000 a month, another man driving his car, fucking his wife, in a home he's still paying the mortgage on? I'm not saying he should have killed her, but I understand."

Since then, Rock has launched The Chris Rock Shows, now in its third season on HBC; put out another album, Bigger Blacker (DenamWords, 1999), based on last summer's HBO special; authored a book, Rock Thirl (Hyperion, 1997); and hosted the MTV Video Music Awards twice.

But Rock isn't content with Boss Nigger status. He's also shooting for cinematic immortality, like his idol, the Woodman. Soon he'll play a hitman in Neil LaBute's Nurse Betty (Studios USA) with Morgan Freeman, and in January

shooting begins on his own screenplay, I Was Made to Love Her (Paramount)—a remake of the Warren Beatty romantic comedy Heaver Can Wait (Paramount, 1978) starring Rock and directed by Ameri-

can Pie's (Universal, 1999) Paul Weitz.
And on November 12, Rock literally drops naked
from the sky in director Kevin Smith's dogmatic new
film, Dogma (Miramax). The movie, which has report-

edly infuriated Catholic groups, features Rock as the rambunctious "13th apostle," Rufus, who must help save the world while dodging two angels of death played by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck.

Settled on the sofa beneath the Boss Niger poster, Rock reminds me of the deacon from one of my favorite old jokes: A woman gets the spirit in church and falls down before the congregation. Her dress life: up and she has no underwear on. The preacher immediately decree. "Downwho cast their eyes upon this naked woman shall so bind!" The decon covers up half of his face.

and says. "Well, bur go one eyel"
Rock's success has depended on
exactly that sort of half-transgression. Even a righteous man
can get away with blasphemy if
he's true to his urges and incredibly funny at the same time.

I notice vou're very punctual.

Of course I am. The biggest problem facing us as a people is that we do not value time. No one ever talks about that. Not Jesse Jackson, not Al Sharpton. We actually think "CP time" is funny and cute, when in reality time is the most precious commodity

in the world. The fact that we think it's cool to be late makes us miss out on everything. We're never going to be anything until we get a hold of this time thing! Where do you think that comes from? My dad has done

business in Africa and he's always complaining about the way Africans deal with time.

Yeah, it's weird. One of my best friends became Muslim, real Muslim Muslim, and moved to Saudi Arabia. He said, "Yo, man, it's so slow here!" That's the only thing the white man's got over us; he's with time. That's 'IT he guy on time is always going to beat the late guy. Always going to make more money. Always! You could add a billion—no, rillions—to the black economy! we could just be five minutes faster.

So bow bave you been spending your time this morning?
I'm getting ready to go to South Carolina. We're
going down there to film a segment [for The Chris
Rock Show] where we try to take down the Confederate flag and replace it with the FUBU flag.

You were born in South Carolina; how long did you live there?

Like, four days. My mother just wanted to be with her mother when she had me. But like a week later we were back in New York.

When you go back to S.C., do you feel a special brand of racial tension in the air?

Nah. I mean, racism is all around but you don't know Mr. Racism until you need the white man. If you're not in a position where you need the white man, you're all right. My mother doesn't need the white man. She's got me! I don't really need the white man. So my South Carolina experience is fine. But I'm sure some brothers will go and bug out.

I'm not even talking about getting hassled by white folks. I'm talking about the history.

But that's everywhere. It's not like while brothers were getting hanged down in South Carolina there was a black mayor up in New York. It's all over the whole United States. If racism is a game of ug, there's no base for the black man where it's like, "Ooh! You can't get me here!" Every place you're liable to get your ass whupped.

Speaking of getting your ass whupped, you've become known for asking the questions no one else will ask when you interview people on your show. Like asking Magic Johnson if women still kick it to him now that he's HIV-positive. Doine an interview is basically like trying to pick

somebody up. You've gotta be real careful. For

SCRAPBOOK: WE SHOWED CHRIS THESE PHOTOS AND ALL WE GOT WERE THESE LOUSY CAPTIONS



"I met Nas

at the Oscars.

There were all of

these huge stars

around and I

was like. Nas!

My night is

complete!

This is me [center, bottom row] in fourth grade. All the white kids took a break from whupping my black ass that day. Notice the expression on my face. There is still a foot stuck in my ass.



This is me and my family: (from left) Tony, me, my mother, Brian, and Andre. We ail just got back from shaking Kid N° Play's hand in Hartem. It's a big flattop convention. Andre was the one who knew that Kid would eventually go to dreads. He's ahead of his time, that Andre.



instance, if you're talking to a girl and her name is Eve, you don't say mything runny with the word "Adam" in it, cause she will lock up. Tou don't want to ak a person things that will make them lock up. So you don't ask Puffy. 'Do you think your lyrics cause violence? He's heard it too many times. (Opens asther shookes) full of jim'n Puff Daddy Proets merchandize See the Puffy box (go tot day? A box, man! I'm on the list. You get a CD, aposter... Igo a Puffy chain, man! Look at that, man! Puffy forever! Puff Daddy! I'm gonna wear that.

Are vou tight with Puffy?

Yeah, we're cool. I've known Puffy for about to years. We're kind of on the same paths: He dropped his album, I dropped my HBO special. We were the only black gays givin dur own] core of Rolling Zhow in 1939. I hosted the MTV Awards, and he was the first act on the MTV Awards, but year has cost as Actually, I saw him at the Oscars with Nas. I was more excited to meet Nas than II was to meet Glem Close or [Steven] Spielberg. There were all of these huge stars around and I was like, Nast Wunjikhi scompleted.

Along with Puffy, you're one of the few black entertainers popular with both white and black audiences. Why do you think that is? [Long pause] Is that your lock-up question?

That's a weird one. I don't know. There's never been a real big comedian who wasn't a crossover success. Redd Foxx was embraced by all poople. And Rodney Dangerfield could go onstage at the Apollo anytime and annihilate. I don't know how Puff did it. But my line of work isn't really segregate.

But you do a lot of material that is directed specifically at black people and is about black culture. You do that routine about eating pig's feet...

The black experience is a universal experience, cause the black experience is the poor experience. A trailer park is just a project on wheels. So any poor white person knows what I'm talking about. Nobody started out rich in America. Even people that have dough can relate to the black experience because their grandfather or great-grandfather was poor. When I listen to you I feel like I'm listening to somebody give a sermon. What part does black-preacher oratory play in getting your message across?

[Laugh] There are a lot of preachers in my background. My grandfather was a preacher. And [lately] I've been listening to all these Martin Luther King Jr. albums. People don't realize that you can get the speeches on vinyl-Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Kennedv...

Have you stolen any of Malcolm X's jokes? He had a great one: What do white racists call a black man with a Ph.D.? [Pause] A nigrer.

A nugger.

I haven't stolen his jokes, but I've studied his delivery.
Comedians and preachers both yell a lot. One thing you never hear in a black church is, "What did he just say? I didn't hear him."

Were you raised a Christian? I wasn't raised anything, to tell you the truth. My grandfatherwas a Methodist preacher. (Or maybe a Baptist?) He was the funniest guy. He used to curse a lot, run around, whatever. A bunch of deacons from his church got arrested for sell-

ing coke. Not selling it in the church, but you know. Iwasn'traised in any particular faith either, and sometimes I feellike I missed out. Do you ever regret that you don't have a connection to a long tradition of belief?

That I'm not Baptist or whatever? And I don't have this thing to pass down? Not at all. 'Cause I do have a long tradition of belief. My belief is in working hard and treating people well. All that other stuff is nonsense.

A lot of that work ethic comes from your father, doesn't it?

Everyone either really wants to be like their dad, or they definitely do not want to be like their dad. My dad had two, sometimes three jobs and I fall into the "really want to be like my dad" category. So I went to work.

You dropped out of school in the 10th grade.
Was there a moment when you just said to yourself, "Forget it"?

My whole grade-school experience was like-pshh! There were 35 students to a class, and that was in the white school! But when I left the white school and went to a black school, the black school was even worse-teachers getting robbed in the hallways and all this crap. So I had to ask myself, "Am I really going to spend an extra year or two to get a diploma from bere? I might as well go and take the GED." So I just dropped out and took it. And I could have passed the GED in grade school, to tell you the truth. It's a multiple-choice test. You have to be real dumb to fail a multiple-choice test.

We used to call it "multiple guess."

All you've gotta do is out-think people. If you don't know the answer on a multiple-choice test, most people put "C." [The people who write the tests] know this. So the answer is almost mever C. See, I figured out school at a young age. The thing I figured out was this! If you get an A, they treat you differently. You get to go to the top of the class and you get all the benefits

SCRAPBOOK: WE SHOWED CHRIS THESE PHOTOS AND ALL WE GOT WERE THESE LOUSY CAPTIONS



This is my dad and mom smiling. My mother is happy because my dad just robbed Nas to give her that necklace.



Not too many people know this, but in 1992 I was voted Funniest West Coast Comedian.



The odds are

Jesus Christ

was black... Did

he look like

Miles Davis?

I don't know.

But it's safe to

say that he

didn't look like

Andy Gibb.

That's my audition tape to play Venus Flytrap in WKRP: The Movie.



That's me happy to be around Spike Lee, a grown man who can't whup my ass.

What about the social life at school?

I had no friends. No girls, Nothing,

You went to an all-white school and then a predominantly black school. How do you explain the difference between the way violence plays out in both settings? I'm thinking specifically of these white kids who keep shooting up schools.

mg pi 2000.

mg pi

tine, you criticize a lot of black men for things like not paying child support. Do you think whites like you because you're not afraid to say that black people need to take responsibility for their own had behavior?

I don't even think about that, man. I'm just telling jokes.

You're never "just telling jokes." You can't be as good as you are by "just telling jokes." You bave to be bitting a deep nerve in the American psyche for all these people to be up in your shit. There are a million people out there "just telling jokes."

I don't know, man.

Credit, schmedit. I just think that everything music, movies, books—has gotten so dumb that a guy like me passes for smart. I'm not saying any-

thing that hasn't been said in a

Who are you going to note for in

2000? I don't know, probably

nobody.

Doyoumeanyouwon'tvote,

or do you mean you just won't vote for president? I probably won't even vote. I can't vote for a Republican, and Tipper Gore is down for cen

I can't vote for a Republican, and Tipper Gore is down for censorship. I can't hang with that. You know, first they go after singers, then the movies: comedians

are right next door. She's talking about taking money out of my pocket! You can't do that to me. I want to eat. I don't want to be censored, so for now, I'm not yoting.

Rufus, your character in Dogma, is determined to prove that Jesus was black. Didyou write your own dialogue for the movie?

Just a little bit. Ad-libs here and there. Preachin' the word.

Do you agree with Rufus?
The odds are Jesus was black. I don't think it's a

controversial viewpoint, to tell you the truth.

It's interesting when people say something like "Jesus was

"I'm lucky I didn't

blow up 10 years

ago when I had

nothing to say

'cause I'd be gone

right now."

It's interesting when people say something like J'esus was black, Boogh, because I thins of the term Black is meaning specifically African-American. Outside America, the terms of reace are more complicated than just black and white. You couldn't get too many Africans to identify themselves as 'black' because they're Nigerian or Senegolese or bey're Zadue will known between the program or Senegolese or bey're Zadue will will be on the strength of the senegolese of the senegolese or 'be taking in American terms, though, Jesus was black'. Jesus Christ could not have married a Kennedy. That's how black he was, okay? If Jesus Christ went to the Oscars with Barbra Streisand, people would say, "Who's that nigger with Barbra Streisand?" Did he look like Miles Davis? I don't know. But it's safe to say that he didn't look like Andy Gibb.

You sound like one of those old men in the barbershop you admire so much. At 34, do you feel like an old man?

I always feel old. I've been doing the same job for 16 years. People have gold watches for working that long. So in that aspect I feel old. Musicians I used to open up for aren't even making records anymore. I was Terence Trent D'Arby's opening act on his first tour.

I was Al B. Sure!'s opening act. That really dates you.

I've seen people come and I've seen people go. I've seen comedy change. I've seen rap change. I've seen everything change in my 10 years in the business.

Yet Chris Rock remains.

It's because I have been lucky enough to grow in little increments.

I'm lucky I didn't blow up 10 years ago

when I had nothing to say 'cause I'd be gone right now.

Are you looking forward to growing old in the biz?

Boy, I can't wait until I'm old. The old black man is the funniset scharacter God ever created. Nothing funnier. Wao Cld black man just talking his mind. He's got a rhythm to him. Got a fisher in the voice that just... ah! I can't wait until I get that. Then you can say whatever you war and it doesn't even have to be funnwhatever you war and it doesn't even have to be funnoun't have to worry about hurting people's feelings or anything. Ooh, when I'm 601 I don't think I'm funny now. But when I'm 60, I'm going to be systemic all

SCRAPBOOK: WE SHOWED CHRIS THESE PHOTOS AND ALL WE GOT WERE THESE LOUSY CAPTIONS



Me and Eddie enjoying a night on tha town at Young MC's one-man Broadway show.



Me and Puffy after P Diddy's opening night at Smokey Joe's Cafe. That's what he looks like! Puffy, the star of Smokey Joe's Cafe!



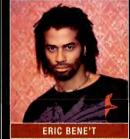
Donald Trump, Daymond John, Russell Simmons, and mo: Just a bunch of guys hanging out after Andre Harrell's "I Just Got My Clothes Out of the Cleaners" party.

AFTER SET SHOW. A SELECT GROUP OF MGD DRINKERS ULTIMATE HIP-HOP AND R&B MUSIC EVENT, THE MGD GOT IN TIGHT AND JAMMED WITH MYSTERY GUESTS.. ON AUGUST 27 IN CHICAGO, MGD HOSTED





THE ROOTS







RICHARD "DICAPRIO" HUGGINS's innovative sampling techniques have made him the hottest R&B star in Europe. So why is it that back in his American homeland he sleeps in an alley with a crack pipe by his side? By Chuck Sklar

hat's Brownsville, Brooklyn's best-kept secret? When it comes to hip hop superstars, it's a young brother who goes by the name DiCaprio. On the European continent he's the hottest thing in R&B, selling more than 30 million albums to a growing international fan base. But back here in the U.S. he's a homeless crack addict who sleeps in an alley with only a tattered blanket and a bottle of Olde English to keep him warm.

At the moment, it's 2 a.m. in a crowded Berlin nightclub and DiCaprio, born Richard Huggins, is feeling great because he's nowhere near the U.S. Surrounded by frauleins after a soldout show, he counts off his European hits on the ringed fingers of his gloved right hand, "Let's see, there's 'Tired of Being Alone, 'Love and Happiness,' and 'Let's Stay Together."

Sound like the titles of classic Al Green cuts? Indeed they are. But these aren't mere beats with samples of the famous Green songs, nor are they covers. What DiCaprio has done is taken the original records and released them under his own name. "I call it 'supersampling,'" he explains, taking a sip of Cristal. "People love sampling. Shit, I love sampling. So I says to myself. Why not give them more of what they love? Give 'em the whole damn song. Why not?"

One reason why not is that DiCaprio, who's now also known as the "Supersampler," has received lots of criticism back in the States. "Those people are just jealous of his success," DiCaprio's manager, Beth Rosenberg, explains. "They're either jealous, or they're Al Green."

For his part, the Rev. Al Green says, "I will forgive this young brother, as soon as I'm done whuppin' his ass."

When asked why he's got such a bad rap in his own country, DiCaprio snaps, "I haven't broke big back home yet 'cause I'm an innovator." Okay. It's one thing to be big in Europe









and not to break big in the States, but why is he a homeless crack addict as soon as his feet touch U.S. soil? "It's simple. They're not ready for me, and I'm not ready for them not being ready for me.

"He don't steal," DiCaprio's mother says from the milliondollar home he bought her in Brooklyn, across the street from the Fort Greene projects. It's true DiCaprio puts his own spin on every record he releases. He can be heard on every cut saying, "One time," then at the perfect moment, "Two times." It couldn't come a second sooner.

Although he has issues with his homeland, DiCaprio hasn't forgotten where he came from. In fact, one great thing about his success is he's sharing it with those he loves. The house he bought his mother is a dream come true for her, and whenever DiCaprio's in town he can be found sleeping in the alley behind it. "I grew up on these streets and now that I've made it, I gotta keep it real by sleeping in them.'

In other words, with new privilege comes new responsibility. But one has to wonder about his true feelings about being a superstar in Europe and a homeless crack addict in the good old US of A. It's confusing, or as DiCaprio himself says, "Did you ever try to buy crack with a pocketful of deutsche marks? They beat your ass!"

Back at the Berlin nightclub, the party is winding down and DiCaprio's getting philosophical, "This could all be over tomorrow. It wouldn't bother me a bit," he muses. "I don't want to be one of those guys making music when I'm outta ideas, just for the money. I'm only going to keep going as long as I have something to say-and Al Green has records."

Manager Rosenberg isn't worried about that. "One time/Two times" will sound just as good on a Curtis Mayfield song.

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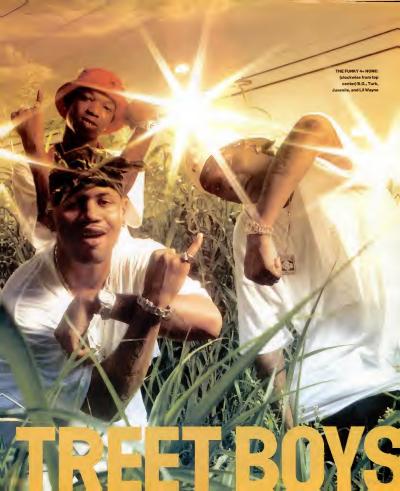
NEW ORLEANS'
HOT BOYS ARE THE
DIRTY SOUTH'S
FANTASTIC FOUR. THE
BLACKSPOT GETS
DRAFTED INTO
THEIR GUERRILLA
WARFARE.

'm standing alone on a corner in South Central Los Angeles at 1 a.m. on a Saturday. I'm at the club Bryan "Baby" Williams, co-CEO of Cash Money Records, told me to meet him at a half hour ago, but neither his nor any other familiar face is anywhere to be found. A red sign on the door says anyone with bandannas, braids, or anything gang-related will not be admitted.

"Damn," he says to me—finally—from his cell phone, "we just left." Baby and the Hot Boys are a few miles away on their tour bus. The crew is in L.A. for a performance later in the week. Then: "Hold on, playboy.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL STRYDER AUGUST 24, 1999. KENILWORTH, LOUISIANA





We're going to swing back around to get you."

In the doorway next to the sign, a hefty bouncer who looks a bit like Mack to is chatting with an off-duty exotic dancer about relationship problems when, after about a 10-minute wait, the headlights from the tour bus shine from across the street. "Who's that?" the voluptuous brown stripper asks, squinting into the bus windows.

But it's impossible to see who's inside. Door pops open. "What's up, man?" Baby say, lounging on top of one of several cafeteria-style tables. "I'm sorry about that." It's taights squeezien to the sardine can of a bus. In the front, Fruit of Islam security si uncomfortably in their sharp suits. In the rear sit the Hot Boys. Tab "Turk" Virgil, Jo, Dwayne "Lill Wayne" Carter, I.G. Christopher "B.G." Dorsey, 19, and their platinum breakout star, Terins "Juvenile" Groy, 24,

"We're getting up early to go to Ōakland." Baby says. The journey to the Bay Area is a returned fixor to Cali rap veteran E-to. The Vallejo, Califi-bred game spitter is shooting a video, and Baby is helb-ben on getting the Hot Boys out there to do a cameo. "He locked out for us and came for our video" B.G.3 "Cash Money Is an Army' from earlier this year—"so we're going to do the same." If there is Money crew, it's their respect and honor for "hood brethern nationwide."

ince the commercial success of Master Pand his No.Limit Records, much of South-based hip hop has been labeled as a one-dimensional style that spotlights money, jewelry, and violence. These elements are abundant, for or in pure control of any pure

The Hot Boys, since their 1997 debut, Get It How U Live!! (Cash Money), were caught up in the southern labeling thing-people focusing on their "countriness" instead of their skills and individuality. But Juvenile, Lil Wayne, B.G., and Turk have proven that they all have distinct characteristics. Juvenile's music, for instance, is happy and carefree-like his personality. As the most animated and outspoken member of the Hot Boys, Juvy has an air of boisterous confidence that makes people want to listen to his music. His 1998 platinum solo debut, 400 Degreez (Cash Money/Universal), boasted party themes intertwined with balling and neighborhood thuggery. Though far from a clown, Juvenile's just not the type to put on the charade of gangster of the year. He relates to everything from a street perspective. Like so many others who rode rap's underground hip hop railroad out of the ghetto, he lives the story of the average young brother who grew up struggling to get what he has.

"I manage my money right," says Juvenile in his husky, slow voice as hesmokes a Newport, Juvy's face reveals a lack of sleep; his white T-shirt and blue jeans are rumpled. Salfy Jeen Raphab Dlates from the trailer's overhead TV set. "I save as much money as I can." Juvenile's just gotten word of some complications with a house he's buying his mother for her birthday. "She's going to be pissed when I cell her that she can't move

in yet," he says, a smirk exposing his gold fronts. "A lot of rappers go and spend their money on a lot of bullshit and wind up in the long run with nothing. I'm tying to get mine because my family is full of poverty. I got a lot of motherfuckers I gotta look out for."

Lil Wayne is another young moneymaker with a toon of responsibility. Arts, he's such aid of his own. He's the reserved, quiet type who takes life as it comes. "Jut myself in overphody clee's hoose," Lil Wayne says, reluctant to speak. His ensemble mirron Juvenile's Gap Basics look: white pocket; To lute jean." Iknow if saw a star and I wanted a picture or something, I wouldn't want a niggs to tell me no." Just as he finishes his sentence, a group of young girk turn a corner into the dining area to stragaze. The girks

PEOPLE WERE FOCUSING ON THE HOT BOYS' "COUNTRINESS" INSTEAD OF THEIR SKILLS AND INDIVIDUALITY.

know exactly who Lil Wayne is, and they have no problem expressing their excitement. In a nervous frenzy, they ask for autographs and pictures, and he gets up to oblige his fans.

Lil Wayne may be a rap star, but his mind is on excelling beyond MC status. He wantst to master other elements of music: producing, songwriting. "My biggest inspiration is Missy Elliott," he says, shading his head in admiration. "She raps, she's supertight, she sings, she dances, writes for others, and on top of all that, she produces. Everything she comes out with is hits. I've been loving Missy."

Apparently, Elliott loves him just as much. Upon hearing his name, he smilles with adoration and calls him her "little boyfriend." Elliott explains: "Before I met Lill Wayne, Irmbaland kept letling me about him. Everyone was telling me about him. Everyone was telling me about how much he liked my work and I was like, "Yeak, right, whatever," because! thought that they were just asying that. But when I finally met him and he told me, I was flatered." Given the type of mainstream-friendly music Elliott is known for, it would sea mu nikley that a raper whose fave old-school artists don't go any further back than N. W. A would be able to appreciate it. As far as Lill Wayne's art—his highly anticipated solo album, The Back that I Med Cash Money/Universal, jie.

due later this year—"It's his voice," Elliott says. "Lil Wayne has the illest voice I've ever heard. Even when he gets older he should keep that same voice, because it goes with his style so much."

Indeed, like Guru said on "Mootly Tha Voice" (1994), a rapper's delivery is what sets him part from other mike handlers on the rap circuit. Lil Wayne's voice, like Juvenile's, Juwns itself into the listener's mind, whether you can dig what he's saying or not. He rhymes in a light and teasing tone, delivering his words with the conviction of a master. Lil Wayne's sound is signature and expressive of himself young and free. There's no age complex, he understands his youth and his ability, and has no problem flaunting both.

t's 11 the next moming, and Baby is handing out orders to his staff for the flight to Oakland. He already told E-40 that he was coming to the shoot; it should only be a matter of time before this crew of cheddar-flashing New Orleans young guns invade the Bay Area.

In the lobby of the plush Hilton Universal City hotel, Baby makes the last few room reservations for his staff then hurries onto the tour bus for the 1:5 flight, luvenile attempts to recover from an eatler flight, while Turk sits beside Baby, taking in his surroundings. The same can be said about Turk's place in the Hot Boys spotlight. Not that anyone is setaling his shime, but Turk is the shy type who'd nather play the back and do his thing when called upon.

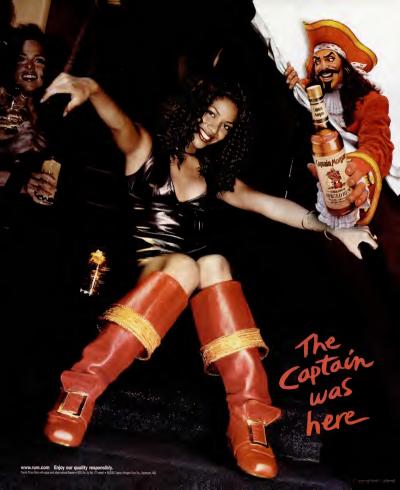
"I was a little shy, but that had to come out of me," Turk says, white bandanna tied tightly around his head. "I was the quietest member of the group, but Baby is bringing it out of me."

As we close in on LAX, it becomes evident they'll miss the flight. According to Baby, all other flights are booked solid, so it's just not going to happen. "Damn, I really wanted to go to that shit," he mumbles to himself. "We owe him one."

ater that night at the hotel, everyone's scattered, handling his own business. B.G., who stayed mostly to himself all day, is kicking back on a small sof ain his room, wearing a plain white T-shirt, jeans, and white P-RE-Obsc. He's avely watering D.I. Hughley's HB obsc. He's avely he's avely handley have a see the faint rands of ghero pain tatrooded on his 19-year-old face, he still sports a golden grin of self-satisfaction.

"I still do the same things I used to do, like go on the different blocks, but I know when to move out," he says in a slow-paced, nasal drawl. "I don't hang in the same places as before because I'm on probation. I don't need to get caught up in no shit."

In time, the Hot Boys hope to take their act to the next level. They for not sure which level yet, but they do know that they want to grow. Why not a state-of-the-art recording studio? Or maybe a production company? They fee still young, and that's what they recognize the most. They're giving themselves the time to find out what some Linely see giving themselves the time to find out what some Linely level was the calm before the storm of adulthood gathers. Hell, even hot boys will have to cool off Sometime. If





and Niko (L.A.). Kim's hairstyl-

Dionne Alexander (N.Y.C.)

HAIRAPPARENT

ists protect her own relaxed,

chin-length, black hair from custom cut by styllst Cessy

styling damage with a myrlad of wigs. A few hairpleces are Lima (with bangs, super long

Dr. Mitchell Cassel, Custom

enses for Phantom of the Opera, Sleepers, Maker of theatrical contact and more, Cassel provides Lil' Kim hand-Color Contacts (N. Y.C.). painted, laminated-for-3-D-effect blue contact lenses at \$1,250 a pair. 6



turned Miss Thickness into a Hard-body Honey. How did says. "I've worked out with guys who cry about doin' pull local health club five times a week for 45 minutes of harr grapefruit, grilled chicken, and snow peas. The grueling her diet-replacing junk food with egg-white omelettes regime (combined with her rumored breast enhanceme treadmill running and 500 sit-ups. Kim also overhauled L motivate Lil' Kim? "Motivate? She motivated mel" he death, Kim and her personal trainer, Money-L, hit this Determined to lose the stress-related pounds she gained following Biggle's The Spa at Glenpoint (Teaneck, N.J.).

ups. Y'all niggas is wimps compared to QB!"



(N.Y.C.). "I saw the Junior Nzingha for Z FACE INC. **FACE PAINT** M.A.F.I.A. 'Players'

"She's very Blonde Ambition!"

or with Jennifer Aniston lay-

ers-all gold-hued). Lima:

with golds and pinks. Nzingha: "Kim loves Beat/Atlantic, 1995) and sald, 'This girl I her unruly brows by bleaching, shaving, Anthem' video (Conspiracy, Undeas/Bi artist. Nzingha emphasizes Kim's expresive eyes with heavy false lashes, tame and cutting them, and colors her face fashion and will try anything in terms of flerce!" says Kim's longtime makeup nakeup. She's the black Barbie."



Jacob the

een Bee Records. From her management to her label staff, Gm surrounds herself with a "The Generale" Butler, Hillary together, Butler: "Our slogan" "Hillary Clinton" Weston, and Lil' Cease) that works, sleeps plays, prays, fights, and wins

Рос Маладе-

mentand

her with a girl's best friends, Diamond Quasar and Tito including two invisibly set Jewelerat diamond bracelets (198 carats total), an iced-out at Manny's of New York. district legends to cover Lil' Kim looks to these Manhattan diamond-

warm (headed by Damien

keep the circle tight and

hake off the lame."

with the pieces Kim buys." says, "You could buy a car

won't talk numbers but

platinum Rolex, and a diamond cross. Jacob

SHARP SHOOTER

Studio

campaign, famed photogrear's Candie's shoes ad rapher LaChapelle beshot Lil' Kim for last

choice. "We hit it off Immediately," he says. "She has great ambition. If she has complete a photo shoot, to go without dinner to she will, I'm so obsesse with her hardcore sex-



(N.Y.C.). Afterhe came her lensman of

Boop meets Marilyn Monroe, hanging out on 125th uality. Kim is like Betty



SENSE imash Inc. Atlanta-based

wned firm tends to the QB's ottom line; handling phone and her upcoming modeling usiness manager Jennifer scountant) minority-wom website (www.lilkim.com), smash's (the late B.I.G.'s ills and tax returns, her endeavor, The Kimberly iones Agency.



stone-studded mesh-and-mink twoes (N.Y.C.). Kim's styllike the approximately \$1,400 rhinedesigners, Yesenia Branca and Nija Chyna Doll Enterpris st since 1996, Hytton-Brim and her plece shown) for Kim's size Oframe urs, create one-of-a-kind outfits

Street in Harlem, about to

go downtown to Fifth

Avenue to shop."



XIDONO'S

WHIP APPEAL

was as happy as a little kid on Christmas getting her first red bicycle. Missy Elliott exactly what she wanted when she walked into Bergen Jaguar 1999 Jaguar XJ8 convertible (list price \$82,338). Lil' Kim knew neated seats, and chrome-plated rims. John Wakely, general manager: "She (Paramus, N.J.): a Phoenix red drop top with premium sound,



Versace. Donatella herself laces Kim SYNONYMOUS SHOPAHOLICS

to frequents the midtown Manhattan store, where and she'll make it look sexy. It's her whole persona." with compilmentary threads, but Kin wants. Valerio: "You can put a large T-shirt on her nanager Veronica Valerio attends to Kim's shoe etish (size 4 1/2) and saves her a seat at Versace



Michele Echols of WITHCARE

Mark Edwards Inc ollowed by an artificial acrylic tig N.Y.C.). Puff Daddy's personal manicurist, Echols tends to Lil manicured) on every finger and which comes already French laborate scrubs and emollic Cim's hands and feet with





Diamond, a York shire terrier, and Big Momma, a

orimped, perfumed, and decke Fort Lee, N.J.), Kim's dogs gel Pekinese. At the Poodle Chate with bows, alongside Eddle Murphy's pooches.



Kenny "Big Ken"Story

curity (L.A./N.Y.C.). Try to cop ewels and Big Ken, veteral of TNT and Greengates Se a feel of the Queen's crown oodyguard for Kim, Branch and others, will bring 6 fee 7 inches and 270 pound

of pain to your frame His fee? \$350 to \$500 a day

came in one month later to buy the same car in blue."

o enter Ray's Sport Shop pixtol
range in North Plainfield, NJ.,
you have to wear protective
goggles and industrial-strength
earphags. The goggles are in ensure
into your propers. The phage are
to protect your sensitive auditory
organs from the dangerous decibel level of rapie-fire gunshots.
Motown Records recording arisis
ian McKinish and two fixed-me and the strength of the st

Brian McKnight and two friends—one is his road manager, the other has the pistol permit—have met with all the requirements for standing inside and aiming their 9 mms at black and white targets shaped like human beings and giant milk bottles.

After squeezing off an hour's worth of bullets, McKnight, 30, his buddies, and I climb into a long black limo for the ride back to Manhattan. "I just recently started shooting," he says, settling into the leather upholstery. "I don't ever want to pull out a gun to settle differences or anything stupid like that. But it would be great to master shooting from a sportsman's perspective. The accuracy."

McKnight's reverence for accuracy, discipline, and mastery of craft brings to mind a story told to me by former Mercury Records public-relations man Tony Johnson. Back in 1997, or maybe late '96, McKnight

WRITER. SINGER. PRODUCER. ARRANGER. PLAYER. BRIAN MCKNIGHT IS A MUSICIAN'S MUSICIAN. SO AMY LINDEN HAS TO WONDER, WHY DOES THIS HIGHLY TRAINED MASTER AT HIS CRAFT LIKE BARRY MANILOW SO MUCH?

was in the studio, in the vocal booth, working on what would eventually emerge as his third diss., Application, McKnight, who d in ked a label deal with Mercury, when he was 19, had always been a one-man operation: producing, writing, and singing his own songs. This time, though, label brass decided to call the big-gun producers in the hopes of guaranteeing him an out-the-box, too-of-the-charts smash.

So behind the boards, on the other side of the Plexiglas, ast Cam "Puff Daddy" Comba, a sure ber in the 1-need-s-hit department. The track pulsing through McKnight's headphones was pure Puffyraherky-jerky, pelvic-thrusting slice of sampledelic, hip hop-infused, radio-ready black pop called "You Should Be Mine (Don't Waste Your Time)." Northe type of material McKnight had been known for, but the type of stuff that kids gobble like jellybeans. McKnight began to lay down the vocal track and nailed the performance without much effort. Sounded great Everyone was happy. But then Puffy asked him to do it one more time. McKnight did, pretty much repeating what he'd just sang. Do it again, Combo insisted, and again McKnight aced it, his silly, subtlet one finding whatever passion lurked beneath the programming. But Puff wanted yet another take. According to the story, he seemed perplexed, and almost dismayed, that McKnight was knocking out the vocals so easily.

When I ask about this "Combs in Charge" saga (like whether it's for real or just some urban myth), Mc-knight smiles and stretches his long legs out in front of him. His answer's laced with cockiness, but also with caution. "I think," he says, "that lots of producers are so used to dealing with people that they need to



compile vocals for, [the producer doesn't] necessarily know what they want. They feel like they need to pice it together because they have to do it so often. When I'm [producing a record for a) singer, if they do it right the first time, the way I want it, then we can move on to the next point. From the time I them the stong I know what I want it to sound like. "McKnight breaks into a chuckle and continues. "Sometimes it turns into a battle, cause the singers are like, "Wow, I paid this gay this much to do the song, and I was only in here for this much to do the song, and I was only in here for the work than I want, or orate more work, so so the artist feels like they've getting...it's funny, but it happens every time."

The irony, or perhaps the just dessert, is that "You Should Be Mine (Don't Waste You Time)," while successful-reaching No. 17 on Billboard's Hot too singles chart—was northe song that broke McKnight's career wide open. That honor goes to "Anytime," an achingly rendered, resoundingly bearfere balled written by McKnight and longtime partner Brandon Bames and produced by McKnight alsone. It whe sort of modulated low song that has been his trademark since his self-vited 1991 debut "With this slice of exquisitely honed R&B ethmaltz (and it's schmaltz of the highest order). Brain McKnight becames attern of the highest orderly, Brain McKnight becames attern.

man, a technically excellent professional. In 1994, Me-Knight produced and arranged "UWill Know," the Knight produced and arranged "UWill Know," the anthemic, "We Are the World"—prejoint that became the centerpiece of the soundrack forth em lovig Lows' Lynic (Polygram, 1994). The song assembled nearly every significant black male singer on the scene at that time Aaron Hall, Keith Sweat, R. Kelly, Usher. That Me-Knight, only a years old then, 1901 a chance to boss around the big cat spoke to his rep. In a world of playas, McKnight was making his name as a player.

Buffalo, N.Y., native, McKnight was raised in the provorbial musical family. (8ig. brother Claude is a founding member of Owers Records hymn-singing beavweights). Take 6.) He studied jazz and gospel as a child, mastering piano, guitar, and trumpet by the time he started high school, and he formed a jazz-fusion combo when he was 17. Lunching an R&B career in the early '90s, when new jack swing was at its zenith, McKnight harkened back to the days of masticians, as opposed to the more modern era's performers or personalities.

And Kedar Massenburg knows from musicians. The current CEO of Motown Records discovered neo-soul royals D'Angelo and Erykah Badu when he some new stuff on top of it. And then they subcontract it to some other writers." Pitiful? Or progress?

ven with foam rubber in my ears, the noise at the shooting range was unpleasantly loud.

But as I learn on the way home, I'd much rather have my hearing blown out by the ricocher of blazing bullets than to subject myself, even for a minute, to the sounds of Brian McKnight's record collection.

Granted, R&B music has always had a strong Hallmark factor, a propensity for syrupy, sugary sentiment. That isn't always a bad thing. But when McKnight-a man who claims Nat King Cole, Thelonious Monk, and Sergei Rachmaninov among his musical inspirations but who, despite his heartfelt affinity for melody and song craft, can tell you dead seriously that he never "got" the Beatles-offers up a whole hella homage to such purveyors of pabulum as Lionel Richie, Christopher Cross, and Barry Manilow, it makes you wanna holler, throw up both your hands, or, in my case, leap out of a speeding limo onto the relatively safe confines of the New Jersey Tumpike, Now, we know McKnight has company in the Christopher Cross fan club. Puffy samples Cross's 1980 "Sailing" on his latest album, Forever (Bad Boy,

MCKNIGHT SMILES EAR-TO-EAR, BASKING IN BIG '80S MEMORIES OF THE COWBOY-HATTED LEAD GUITARIST. "THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING, RICHIE SAMBORA ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN, KILLING IT! BRINGS OUT THE WHITE BOY IN ME!"

Sure, he'd teetered on the brink of big-time fame before, scoring modorate hist like his 1993 duet "Love Is" with Vanessa Williams (which he didn't write or produce). But "Anytime" sent him into the stratosphere. In addition to being a Billboard No. 1 pop single, it earned two Grammy nominations and worn a Soul Train Music Award. It became an American "Our Song," suitable for birthday banques, bar mitzvahs, and candlelight dinners alike.

Mention to McKnight that crooning about matters of the heart might make him seem a tad corny to jaded young hard rocks who swear allegiance to Ia Rule and DMX, and he laughs, "If being corny means dealing with real feelings and emotions, then I have no problem with that, 'Cause I think that's easier for everyone to relate to than most of the things talked about in hip hop songs. You can be a hardcore hip hop head, but when you're ready to get busy. you're not talking about 'Holla Holla.'" He grins a sly grin and adds, "unless that's the kind of sex you're into. There's a place for everything, But if I get called 'old-fashioned' because I believe in the art of songwriting, then I have no problem being old-fashioned. [Back in the day] you had to be talented. You had to have a complete package. Now they say, 'We can make you a star. Can't sing? Okay, we'll make you a star because you have star attitude. You look the part.' Before, you had to be the part."

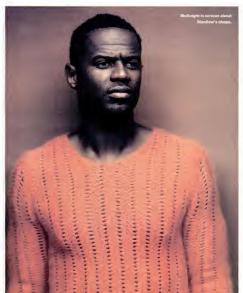
Prior to achieving pop-star status as a love man, McKnight was long getting love for his skills as a music was doing A&R for Universal Records in the mid '90s. And during the recent Polygram Records shake-up, when Mercury artists were being scattered to the wind, Massenburg was adamant about keeping McKnight on his label. "You have a guy like Brian," say Massenburg. "He plays nim struments. He's one of the most incredible arrangers around. That's stardom. He sold a million necrook last time out. Then you have artists like D'Angelo, who sold 1.4, million, but he southered save member be true he has million, the the southered save member to you got Stevie Wooder, who is asprentar, and he early you got Stevie Wooder, who is asprentar, and he early ven are how he looks."

Today, McKnight is clean shaven with closecropped hair. He's dressed in gym shorts and a tank top. He also wears the musician mantle with unveiled pride. When he fills out insurance forms, he lists his occupation as "songwriter." Mention to him that the ability to sight-read isn't exactly a major selling point in today's market, and he bristles. "That's because the people who are making music aren't necessarily musicians," he says, as the limo whisks past yet another Jersey strip mall. "They manipulate machines. It's always amazing for me to find out that the guy who's producing the songs isn't necessarily the guy who's playing the stuff. The credit for 'songwriting' goes to the 'programmer,' then the 'coordinator.' Sometimes you find 10 writers listed for one damn track, 'cause originally it was another song. So the original writers get 50 percent credit, and [the new ones] write 1999). But Barry Manilow? Barry Incking Manilow?!! McKnight Lugh. "Veh, he is the king of schmaltar," he admits. "You think Barry,' you think "Wow, that's really corny." But if you listen to his music, pound for pound, those are some of the greatest songe-rev mire ten. Any of them. "Mandy! Thom a songwine's standpoint. Melody, lyin, tearing at your beartstring..." McKnight stops, sensing that he might be making me violently cargic."

He leans back in the scat and laughs. It's clear I'm trapped. So, searching desperately for common ground, I offer up the best bone I can think of: a guilty pleasure, my love for New Jensey hair rockers Bon Jowi. McKnight slaps his knee and whoops in delght. "Yealth" he says. You always used to wait for that big ballad... to see Richie Sambora on top of the mountain, killing it. "McKnight smiles earto-ear, basking in big. 80n memonics of the cowhoyto-early basking in big. 80n memonics of the cowhoyled the state of the same state of the same state of the lock and the state Locklear. "That's what I'm saying, Sambora on top of the mountain, killing it! Brines out the white bow in me!"

While we're on the subject of white boyst rapped inside Brian McKnight, there's the Steve Perry thing, Now, McKnight would not be the first accomplished black singer! I've met with a bad case of the Stope Perry thing, And I just don't get it. That's Steve Perry thing, And I just don't get it. That's Steve Perry as in the shag-haired, leather-lunfed, leather-lungd, and enormo-noed frontman for that most heimous of Cheez Whiz classis rook bands: Journey. He





who's solely responsible for loosing the unholy terror of "Oh Sherrie" on the world in 1984. That Steve Perry. It's heavy. But my man McKnight's got mad love to give. "Perry came along at a time when we were missing that kind of singer," he says. "All that drama. He's a combination of Sam Cooke and... (at this point McKnight pauses as I gasp for air), "You cannot deny the fact that Journey had some really great songs. Remember junior high dances? 'Open Arms'? There's no way around that, 'Foolish Heart'? Steve Perry is very Sam Cooke. There are certain white singers who just translate well to blacks. The Doobie Brothers, Steely Dan, Peter Cetera... [their voices | translate to us. But it always goes back to the songs, too."

The songs, To McKnight's credit, those questionable influences haven't soiled his own material. He may champion the Star Search-worthy histrionics of a Steve Perry. And he may tell me, proudly, that he just bought a Rick Springfield record ("'Cause I heard 'lesse's Girl' on the radio-that guitar!") And he may be aghast to discover that I, a person of obviously high intellect, doesn't feel Toto the way he does ("You gotta love 'Rosanna.' And 'Africa'? Great changes, great melodies, a great synth solo!"). But so far, and we'll keep our fingers crossed, only a little of that stuff has shown up in the patient, controlled, romantic music McKnight creates.

McKnight's fifth album, Back at One (he released a Christmas record, Bethlehem, on Motown last winter), continues the polished-but-passionate singing and songwriting of Anytime, with the sort of confidence that comes from selling a lot of records on one's own terms. "I have finally figured out the formula to being able to maintain my musical integrity," McKnight says, and I notice the G-clef tattoo on his left bicep, "and still give listeners the status quo, what they need [in order to] to feel like they're connecting with the music. As opposed to writing songs that are above their heads, musically. What Anytime showed me is that I can talk about what I wanna talk about, in a language I wanna talk about it in, with technical changes that, at least, satisfy me." If McKnight's feeling any pressure to duplicate Anytime's success, he's too smart to let on. "I didn't go into the studio and say. I need to write another Anytime. I just wrote just what was in my heart and made sure there weren't a whole lot of outside influences," he says. "I'm at a point now that when it comes to ballads, there really shouldn't be any other person's ballads on my record but mine."

Regardless of McKnight's self-assurance (some might call it arrogance), Back at One employs at least a little input from others. Hot hit producer Rodney lerkins chimes in for two cuts, a concession McKnight grudgingly made to the audience he gained via MTV's airing of the "You Should Be Mine (Don't Waste Your Time)" video. "I know I'm not a hip hop producer, it's not what I do. But I know that there has to be a certain amount of that sound on my record. It's cool, I don't think that stuff is necessarily as good as the stuff that I do, but sonically, for those kids who may have bought the last record for that kind of sound, it's on there. Will Jerkins's songs be the hits?" McKnight shrugs somewhat dismissively, "I doubt it."

That might sound like egomania, but after listening to Back at One, I tend to agree with him. On the material he both wrote and produced, including the title track/first single, the song and the singer fit together like pieces of a puzzle. A sense of longing runs through the work, and wonderment and regret over the experience of falling in and out of love. His voice and his music retain a reserved yet never restrained sense of maturity. It's subtle, successful stuff. But when he attempts up-tempo tracks like the pair produced by Jerkins, McKnight sounds like someone trying too hard to be hip. Never has a singer so young sounded so out of his element when singing the music of his own generation. It's not that McKnight isn't good enough to do it, he just doesn't sound comfortable.

e're back in Manhattan now, Mc-Knight and his management team are sitting at a cocktail table in the bustling lobby of the Rihga Royal hotel. They're running over the schedule: tentative tour dates, charity basketball tournaments, the recording of a Spanish version of the new record. McKnight is somewhat fidgety, as if he has somewhere else to go. There's a faint tinkle of piano making its way through the hum of industry chitchat, and Mc-Knight shifts his body to watch an older gentleman over in the corner playing a baby grand. The song is recognizable, but I don't know the title. A standard, though, one that McKnight no doubt ran through when he began his studies. Slowly but surely his innerwhite-boy-big-hair daydreams and compone sentimentality begin to recede. All that's filling him now is the quiet sound of a man playing the piano. "He's good," McKnight says reverently, just under his breath. And then the professional musician falls silent, enrapt in the series of notes.

To Leslie, with love, Amy

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RÉMY MARTIN



MOS DEF

ON THE BLACK-HAND SIDE Jef may be def. L.L. may be even deffer. But a soft-spoken book merchant from Brooklyn, N.Y., is the MOS DEF of them all. Strap on your backpack and prepare for the revolution. By Chairman Mao

or Defis somebody; some people just aren't sure exactly white some body. The curious young brownskinned lady who leans out of the passenger's side of her best friend's ride on this overest at demoon in Manhattan's Solio is trying to decrease the solid properties of the solid properties white kick, jeans, and a generic corange No. 5 floor-ball jercy-over to the vehicle so be can scray his name on a scrap of paper. Mos returns to his photo shoot with a peculiar grin.

"What happened?" the photographer asks. "Did she ask you who you were first?"

"Yeah," he says, pride unbruised. Such periodic bouts with anonymity are likely to change very soon. Never mind that in the past two years Mos's fluid rhyme cadence has blessed a catalog of quality recordings as a soloist, including 1997's "Universal Magnetic." And in tandem with frequent partner in rhyme Talib Kweli (Rawkus's 1998 Mos Def & Talib Kweli Are Black Star) and other starstudded pals (1998's "Body Rock" with Tash of Tha Alkaholiks and Q-Tip), Mos Def has kept an extrasolid grip on the microphone. The uncanny quality of his vocal melodiousness-a gift that fuses the Bronx, N.Y.-style singsongy routines of old schoolers like the Fantastic Romantic Freaks with the warm, elastic mid-range of a Steve Arrington-has elevated him to underground savior status among progres-

In the coming months, there will be a triplepronged assulf ofm? Mos mania. The former teen actor, who has appeared in ABC's God Bless the Child (1988), CBS's The Coshy Mysteries (1994), and commercials for the filtes of Visa, is working behind the scenes at MCA on his own label deal, GoodTree Media. Appress time, diplomat Mosw ass scheduled to be seen onstage with Kweli as one of several hip hop acts (including, Common and Tony Touch).

sive-minded hip hop fans worldwide.

invited to perform at the Fifth Annual National Cuban Rap Festival. And then, of course, there're his dual record releases: Hip Hop for Respect (Rawkus)—a benefit album for victims of pote brutality inspired by this past February's fatal police brutality inspired by the past brutant of the Bronx-and his own highly anticipated debut solo album, Black on Bab Sidate (Rawkus).

Later that day, on the roof deck of a nearby hotel, Mos ponders the significance of his solo album's title. "If people can arrive at prejudices about you or your culture based on art, then prejudices about who you are as a person follow. Like, 'Oh, Martin [Lawrence] is just a silly coon on TV. All black people are silly coons." That s'the motivation behind my album," he oriented toward an emerging musical style that resided closer to the street.

By 1994, Mos Def was doing it. His first rap group, ULTD. (Uban Thermal Dynamics), which consisted of one of his brothers and a female high school "drinking buddy," failed to make an impact despite a moderately well-received single. But after the night Mos convinced Mase of De La Soul to degity a poetry reading he'd organized in the basement of his family's min-mail in Brooklym, he began bumping heads with his modern hip hop heroes: the Native Tongues clique. Not long afterward, he was guest-appearing with them of festive hip hop hootenamies like De La' 1996 "Big Brother Beat" and the original, rousing nighe-tub skit that opens and the original, rousing nighe-tub skit that opens

"BLACK ART CAN BE DIMENSIONAL, DIFFERENT, AND NEW, BUT RELATED TO THE PEOPLE."

says, "to show that black art can be dimensional, different, and new, but related to the people and the street in a way that the people can get it. I'm not doin' it for the little circles and microcosms. I'm doin' it for the people."

Born Daine Smith a quarter century ago (later known as actor and spoken-word poet Daine Bezg) and the oldest of nine siblings, Mor's affinity for the arts was apparent from early on. Although his folks divorced while Daine was still young, the family remains close-knit. It was while he shared time as a preteen between Morn's and Pop's respective homes that Mos's musical culcustion took root. His father, and Mos's musical culcustion took root. His father, provided juzz, African-American folk, and plenty of Stevie Wonder, Steely Dan, and Phoche Snow. The sounds cascading around the Flatbush and Bed-Suy cribs of his mom's and grandm's were more

A Tribe Called Quest's swan song, 1998's The Love Movement (Jive).

Mos's own transformation from promising protégé to recognized hip hop citizen may be imminent—particularly given the impressive fidelity of Black on Both Sides. Ultimately, Mos may see his most important artistic role as part of a larger fabric.

"When you was younger, man, you felts so isolated listening to his hop," he says, now almost fully shrouded in darkness. "It was so unlike traditional forms of music, you feltike this mutant. Like it wasn't attached to anything, or it didn't have any history. And that's not the case at all. It is like the grandson, the nephrew, the son, the child of all of these difference of the control of th



The Gospel According to Conrad Muhammad

HE'S LEFT THE NATION OF ISLAM, and now he wants to mobilize the hip hop nation into a multiracial political force. All the man is after is your heart, your soul and your vote. By David J. Dent

onrad Muhammad presides over a rally in shouting distance of New York's City Hall. It's March 10, 1999, five weeks after the death of Amadou Diallo, the unarmed African immigrant killed in the vestibule of his Bronx home by four NYPD officers who fired 41 shots. A crowd of about 2,000 mostly young African-Americans has gathered to protest the shooting and police brutality in general. The late-winter breeze carries just enough bite to provoke chills. Posters punctuate the sea of people. They read, KILLER COPS, RETIRE [New York City Mayor Rudolph] GIULIANI, and THIS IS OUR DAY.

It is, in fact, Muhammad's day: the City Hall debut of his activist organization. A Movement for Conscious Hip Hop Activism Necessary for Global Empowerment (CHHANGE). The rally didn't draw the 41,000 protesters Muhammad had envisioned-1,000 for each bullet that was fired at Diallo-but his charisma overshadows the disappointing turnout. Muham-

encased in a brown leather jacket, beige turtleneck, and jeans. He introduces each speaker and nudges the mike away from the long-winded ones. The speakers, including Afrika Bambaataa and DI Kool Herc, draw cheers from the crowd as they blast the NYPD-more than 100 members of which keep watch over the proceedings. But Muhammad himself gets the loudest applause with his keynote address.

"As Jesus once said," he tells the crowd in a madefor-sound-bite bantone, "Man does not live by bread alone. You do not live by music alone.... If lesse Ventura can go from the World Wrestling Federation to the governor's mansion, then we can put members of the hip hop nation in the state assembly and city council." This is the new gospel according to the new Conrad Muhammad.

n the early 1990s, Muhammad was widely considered to be the heir apparent to Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan. He'd risen through the Nation of Islam's (NOI) ranks to become national youth minister, and then minister of Harlem's Mosque No. 7, a historic seat once occupied by Malcolm X and Farrakhan, Along the way, Muhammad became known as the Hip Hop Minister, making the guest lists of industry functions. In 1993, he calmly helped resolve the beef that was about to escalate between A-Plus of Wreckx-N-Effect and Q-Tip, then of A Tribe Called Quest. "There's a lot of blood that could have been shed were it not because of [Muhammad's] ability to mediate," says Bill Stephney, CEO of StepSun Music, And in 1996. Muhammad spearheaded the Hip Hop Day of Atonement, a memorial gathering held at Mosque No. 7 nine days after the drive-by shooting death of Tupac Shakur.

But in February 1997, Farrakhan removed Muhammad from his post, reportedly for mismanagement of Mosque No. 7's affairs, though Muhammad denies this. The following year, Farrakhan exonerated Muhammad, but the Nation never publicly stated why he had been removed in the first place. Muhammad left the Nation, took several months off, began graduate school at Har-

mad has chiseled features and a lean frame, which is vard, and separated from his medical-doctor wife, Michele Griffith. "[The separation] sort of devastated me because I don't think we ever really had a chance to make it," he says. "Our entire marriage was either in the context of her medical school or my very intense, stress-filled life being a minister in the Nation." Today, he and Griffith, who are in the process of divorcing, share custody of their three children, Amir. 8, Naimah, 6, and Conrad Ir., 5.

Since leaving the NOI, 35-year-old Muhammad has been trying to redefine his role as an activist. He splits his time between a Harlem apartment and a dormi-

THE NEW

What becomes a leader on the eve of the 21st century? For the hip hop generation, it's not just about juice. It's also about knowing how to blend oldschool, community-based, grassroots activism with newschool political savvy. Is this an exhaustive list of everyone who's out there trying to do the right thing? No. But look for these five young visionaries from around the country to bring the noise into the next millennium.

THE REFORMER

Newark City Councilman CORY BOOKER is rolling up his sleeves to revitalize Brick City

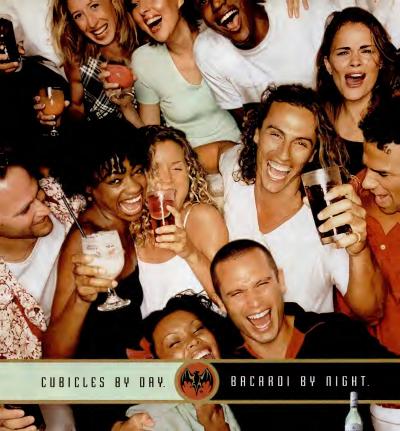
O'yr Booker, 30, may have aristocedic crade dantales, but don't look for him at the richect club. This Rhodes Scholer with a Yale law degree is puttin't if down in Newark as a Bemocratic city councilman of the 60,000 constituent Central Ward, ground zero of the inflamous 1907 riots. "I want to let residents know that all the securces they meet to be successful are right here," says the Harrington Park, 1, native and former all-American light and, A., native and former all-American light and, who parlayed his football prowess into a schol-arship to Stanford University.

Booker made his first run at political office last



dealing" there. For now, Booker seems content applying his advanced degrees to the betterment of Brick City. But his name is already being talked about for higher office—though he says he has no comment on rumors of a possible 2003 mayoral bid.

David Wail Rice



8 TH LARDI. THE USER OS GALLAT ALUM SINCE 1862.

tony room at Harvard, where he's beginning his third year as a master's candidate at both the University's Divinity School and John F. Kennedy School of Government. He hosts "One on One With Min. Contad Muhammad," a radio show on New York's WLIB that focuses on social, cultural, and political issues in the hip hop generation. He is still a practicing Muslim.

Last year, Muhammad founded CHHANGE, a nonprofit organization that seeks to mobilize the hip hop nation into a cohesive, inclusive policical force. But can a former Nation of a multiracial movement? Although the will focus on young Affordan-Americans and Latinos, he plans to welcome everyone into his organization. "I definitely see a movement that involves people of all colors, different races, and different religions. We all inhabit the world," he says. "And as inhabit the world, he says." And as inhabit the world." he says. "And as inhabit the world." he say

inhabit the world," he says. "And as young people, we are going to *inherit* the world."



races, and different religions. We all MUHAMMAD SPEAKS: Conrad holds forth at a City Hall rally in New York City last March.

esse Ventura. Warren Beatty, Jerry Springer. Sonny Bono, America's fascination with "alternative" candidates reflects disillusionment with politics as usual, from Watergate to Monica, Muhammad wants to ride the wave and sweep hip hop artists into office. "I won't rest." he says, walking to class on a sunny day at Harvard "until we await election returns with as much anticipation as we await a new rap album." The potential power base is there: About 38 million 15- to 24-year-olds live in the U.S., 11 million of whom are African-American and Latino. And according to Robert Brown, professor of political science and African-American studies at Emory University in Atlanta, anyone who wants to lead young people must have an "outward recognition of hip hop and hip hop culture, a mainstream recognition that hip hop has been very pivotal."

Picture Muhammad's dram: It's 2001. Naughty by Nature's Treath and Vinnie ar, say, city councilmen in Bast Orange, N.J.—or maybe one of them is mayor. DJ Kood Herr, and Salth-Pspa's Spinderella are councilmembers at City Hallin New York. Chuck Dawges a campaign in Roosevelt, Long Island or Alanta. In reality, Vinnie says he has considered running for office, but 2001 may be too 500 for him. Hip hop founding father Rool Herr, on the other east of the 2006 of the council or and of the other council or the council

Muhammad himself, who would consider running as either a Democrat or an independent, says that the minute Harlem Congressman Charles Rangel reities, he'll campaign to be Congressman Muhammad. "He's an exciting guy," says Rangel of Muhammad. "But there will be a lot of strong candidates for my seat plwen1 reiting." Muhammad says he may run for a Harlem city council seat while he waits on Rangel. The would-be candidate's agenda is abend of conservative and liberal view. He's against abortion—"1 believe that people should choose not to have irresponsible sex, he says—except in the case of rape, incest, or if a pregnancy endangers the mother's life, he's pro affirmative action and has mixed feelings on the death penalty, "I'The death penalty, life and penalty has reported by the penalty has reported with the understanding that beach and the same action and has the same and the same action and has the same and the same action action and the same action action and the same action act

Muhammad faces a tough challenge: Voter turnour is consistently lower among young people than any other age group. According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate in Washington, D.C., only 28 percent of people between 18 and 24 yoted in 1006. an

all-time low. "You're not likely to vote if you don't feel connected to what's going on in an election and what its stakes are," says Ruy Tixkeira, a voting expert for the Economic Policy Institute in Washington.

But Muhammad, determined to show the hip hop generation what's at stake, says that political awareness goes beyond elections. He criticizes some hip hop moguls for not understanding this. "When we had the Hip Hop Day of Atonement, Suge [Knight] had brothers from Death Row there. And [Sean] Puffy (Combs) promised he was going to come." he says. "Then [Puffy] came to the mosque a few days before and begged me to take him off the program. He said, 'You are hurting me with my deal,' I didn't know what he was talking about, Ultimately, I found out this was the multimillion-dollar deal with [Arista Records president] Clive Davis that he signed a few weeks later." After VIBE made several attempts to reach Puffy for comment, his publicist set up a day for an interview, but later canceled.

THE VOTE GETTER

Voter-awareness activist DONNA FRISBY teams up with hip hop luminaries to bring young people to the polls

Donne Frisky, 35, believes in the popular of the seller. As the work of the seller. As the vote from 1970 1998, Frisk work of from 1970 1998, Frisk work of from 1970 1998, Frisk parameters with the popular of the pop

the 1998 congressional election. This year, she also briefly served as national director of voter empowerment for the NAACP. The Philadelphia-based former junior high school teacher was a consultant for Philadelphia candidata John Street's voter mobilization

tant for Philadelphia candidata John Streat's voter mobilization project (the elaction is this month). Frisby now serves as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee for the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation. The Industrious activist also has a gig as

vice president of Rappers Educating All Curricula through Hip-Hop (REACH). The program, cofounded this year by Chuck D—the organization's prasident—and Frisby, secruits rappers for motivational talks with kile. Frisby's goal is to break down legislative and political concerns for the next generation of young leaders. "I'm the behind-the-soones, stratogic person," she says. "I'm the person that! like jut figure out what messages are important





Jöyof Cola.

T S C н 0 0

onrad Muhammad was born in St. Louis in 1964 as Conrad Tillard. His parents, Ronald Tillard, a tailor and a jazz flutist, and his mother, Jacqueline Jones, who now works in the record industry, divorced when he was 2 years old. When Conrad was 14, he moved with his father to Washington, D.C. and began spending summers in Atlanta, where his mother and stepfather, Horace Iones, now a record producer, had moved.

"Back then, the most prominent role models in the black community were athletes because that was before hip hop culture had developed such strong youthful role models," says Muhammad. So basketball was his life; he played point guard in high school. Then in the summer of '83, after Muhammad graduated, Jesse Jackson ran for president. "My hero went from being Dr. J. to Jesse Jackson," he says.

By the time he entered Lincoln University, near Philadelphia, Muhammad was a Jackson volunteer. eventually becoming one of the youth leaders of the campaign in Pennsylvania. Jackson's defeat disillusioned Muhammad. Then on August 22, 1984, he heard Min. Louis Farrakhan speak at a rally in Washington's Malcolm X Park. Farrakhan's speech was called "Stand Up for Strong Black Leadership."

"I mean, just the Minister's cadence, his rhythm and his conviction." Muhammad says, tears forming at the memory. "He talked about how Marcus Garvey loved black people and had a vision for us and wanted us to go back to Africa. But when the press got after him, black people turned on him and he died a broken and

lonely man.... Oh, man, I mean, it affected me." Muhammad vowed to join the Nation that day. He attended mosque while he college-hopped for a few

"IF JESSE VENTURA CAN GO FROM THE WORLD WRESTLING **FEDERATION TO THE GOVERNOR'S** MANSION, THEN WE **CAN PUT MEMBERS** OF THE HIP HOP NATION IN THE STATE **ASSEMBLY AND CITY** COUNCIL," SAYS

vears-to Lincoln, Middlebury, Weslevan, and Morehouse. He settled at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where Conrad would meet Khallid Muhammad, the controversial NOI minister who would go on to lead the Million Youth March in New York City. Khallid introduced him to Farrakhan. Conrad was soon on a fast track in the organization, becoming National Youth Minister in 1988 and eventually a rival to Khallid. They remain rivals today.

MUHAMMAD.

In the late '80s and early '90s, Conrad Muhammad's star continued to rise. The message of the Nation was compatible with that fight-the-power era of hip hop, and he became the official messenger of the NOI's nationalistic perspective to young people. He carried the word to rallies and to the streets of Harlem, where he went in search of young brothers to recruit into the Nation. Muhammad met a lot of rappers outside the famous Dapper Dan's, a men's clothing store across from Mosque No. 7 on 125th Street. "They would start coming to the Mosque and I would get asked to speak at things," Muhammad says, "I was young and they could relate to me."

When he was named minister of Mosque No. 7. Muhammad capitalized on the contacts he made as national youth minister. He says Spinderella, Goodie MOb, Doug E. Fresh, and A Tribe Called Quest, among others, all worshipped at the Harlem mosque. Smooth Bee (formerly of Nice & Smooth) grew up in a Muslim household but straved from religion as a teenager. Then, about 10 years ago, he met Muhammad while walking down 125th Street. "We started talking and he was telling me that he was familiar with our music," says Smooth Bee. "That shocked me to an extent because of how disciplined the Nation is, you know." Smooth Bee started attending mosque and joined the Nation, "I felt that Allah was calling me through him."

While Muhammad built his relationship with the hip hop community, his share of foes in the Nation grew. Some elders at the mosque reportedly felt he was spending too much time on the business and feuds of hip hop, and not enough on the mosque. Then there was the growing perception that he was heir apparent to Min. Louis Farrakhan, Muhammad made enemies for other reasons, too-like his flamboyant-seeming

THE HOUSE ROCKERS

Congressmen JESSE JACKSON JR. and HAROLD FORD JR. are making names for themselves on Capitol Hill

the good-old-boy network that s the United States Congress, Rep. Jesse L. Jackson Jr. (D-III.) and Rep. Harold E. Ford Jr. (D-Tenn.) proudly bear the mantles of their fathers' civil rights legacles, not to mention their names. Jackson is the occupies the congressional seat of his father, the first African-Ameri-Jackson, 34, and Ford, 29 (he is the voungest member of the House). have elready distinguished themyoung means you often have the ism, the energy, and the willingness to try new things," says Jackson.

while serving es national field director of the National Reinbow Coalition (1993-95), Jackson Implemented a nonpartisan voter registration program that signed up

ested in helping folks empower and enrich their lives," says the House congressional spokesperson for position to secure federal funding

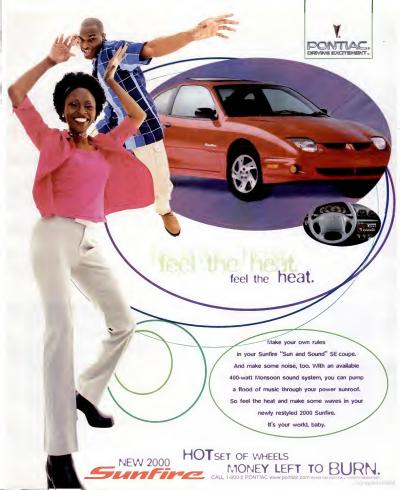


RISING SONS: Jackson Jr. (left) and Ford Jr.

end push for e \$200 million increas in funding for programs that help college students gain access to higher education



him "it's certelnly not out of the realm of possibility." Stay tuned: This hip hop head who loves the might be the one to paint the White House black. David Wall Rice



lifstyle. He drove a Jaguar, wore Brooks Brothers. "I like extravagant things," he says. "But I don't worship nice things." he says. "But I don't worship nice things." As a Nation minister, Muhammad says his salary was 5300 a week, he liwed rentrecei in a pansonage in Mount Vermon, N.Y., and says he made the bulk of his income giving speeches, mostly at colleges. He also owned a profitable business called Black Speakers International, Inc., a lecture management firm that represented activitis, rappers, and politiciams, including Chuck C), pless elebocat, or the strength of the control of control control c

Muhammad couldn't see a painful day coming in his own life—February 26, 1997. It was the day he was removed from his position at Mosque No. 7. He refuses to discuss the specific charges, and the NOI did not respond to requests for comment on Muhammad's departure. Regardless, he was one. "It was a certain degree

of shock, a certain degree of sadness, but also a certain degree of relief," he says. "I'd become frustrated with certain obstacles and certain organizational policies." Today, Muhammad says he makes his living working on the radio program and that he owes Harvard \$56,000 in back tuition. The Jag is history.

an a former college-hopper who now bounces between New York and Harvard, settle down and lead a movement and evaluably become a congressman? Perhaps the experience as a Nation minister-juggling the delicate politics of an NOI mosque and mediating battles between feuding rappers—should help. Yet as someone with a sast in the Nation offslam

net as someone with a past in the Nation of Islam and as Farrakhan's former protégé, Muhammad faces the anti-Semitism question as he tries to go mainstream. "If he's aiming toward conciliation and reconciliation and not scapegoating people, then we



Muhammad's departure. Regardless, (From left) L.L. Cool J, Muhammad, and Puffy at VIBE's first anniversary party, 1994

could say he's doing a good job, "say Gail Gans, a director of the Civil Rights Information Centre of the Anti-Defamation League in New York City." But unnot if he's going to jump from this platform and so haranguing other groups." Muhammad maintains, no prejudices against anybody, "he says. "I am not eachddine advonce from working with me."

Khallid Muhammad—who left the Nation in the mid '90s in the wake of his disparaging comments about Jews, Catholice, and gays in a speech at Kean College in Union, NJ.—asph e door it think much of Conrad Muhammad's latest move. "Many civil rights organizations have a youth core and believe frimity that registering as many of our people as possible to wote with the contract of the

that's why youth are responding to a message of politics of responsibility instead of a message of doom and gloom," he says. But are they responding to any message, given the low level of voter turnout amone young people?

CHHANGE hosts a series of weekly rallies in Harlem to address just that issue. A recent gathering drew about 200 people: rappers without record deals. artists, writers, students, teenagers from the Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network, and community activists. There's always a call for unregistered voters to come forward. They walk like those who answer the invitation call to accept Jesus at a church service. The unregistered voters are cheered as they fill out the forms and say a few words to the crowd. Jean Muhammad. Conrad's former secretary in the Nation who left along with him, brings around a basket at least once. Muhammad says that on a good day, he brings in about \$400.

In the year since the organization was created, Muhammad says CHHANGE has registered 7,600 new voters and at press time had launched the campaign of its first candidate, William Allen, 34, for the September' 99 election for district leader in Harlem. Allen is the manager of a nonprofit health and human services agency in the South Brows.

Muhammad, who says he was once "the prince of nationalism," now loves to highlight the ideological diversity of the crowds he draws. According to one critic, however, he's moving to the mainstream because he's failed as a nationalist and has nowhere else to go but to the high port pation, which itself continues to become more mainstream. But is that such as dap lace to go?" I believe! I can stand up for the rights of my people and keep my dignity and treat everybody the way! want to be treated, "he says," I'm not trying to be the most unacceptable black man in the world." Bu "Additional reporting by Jill Prilake."

THE HOMETOWN HERO

Once an engineer, Los Angeles City Councilman ALEX PADILLA is back on the block—and busy making it better

When Democrat Alex Padilla was elected to the Los Angeles City Council in June, Generation Mex arrived. Padilla, 25, is the youngest of a wave of Latino elected officials that has event California politics in the 106s. A few years after graduating from the Massachustra Institute of the Massachustra of the Massachustra in the California of the Massachustra of of the Massach

representing the Seventh District's 230,000 constituents in his non-partisan post. "This lamp neighborhood," he says. "it's heavily Latino, and the everage one is 26."

and the everage age is 26."

The son of working-cless Mexican immigrants, Padilla caught the community-service bug as a teenager around the same time, he says, that he discovered N.W.A. After a brief stint each engineer at Hughes Alterst Company in Canogs Park, Calif., Padilla ram



compaigns and mobilized voters for local Latin politicians. Hundreds of high school and community-collegs students volunteered to work on Padilla's campaign later who by a 20 to 1 margin and its already giving back to his community's young people. Padilla's first in-office act was repairing a traffic light on a busy steet near the elementary school he attended. Next on his agencie. Improving the neighborhood's achools, with a focus on after-school programs. "We've had our share of rough times," he says. But today, the streets already look a little brighter around Padilla's way.

Jeff Chang

PHOTOS INC.



V FASHION

Pink front alls plans shawl asymmetrical dress by Asanshe West for Predicts. Threads; not "fest hand-improvidenced shareby by Matesteck boots by Cesser Paciotis, Threads; not "fest hand-improvidenced shareby by Matesteck boots by Cesser Paciotis, the part of the part of the part of the part of the part with tweed funded strips, and out soul," all by part of the part of th

The ultimate urban bohemians at home in their gypsy camp in Milan. They dress fresh in handwoven and quilted clothing, live off the land, travel in packs of family and friends. They always keep it moving.

Photographs by Davide Cernuschi; Styling by Emil Wilbekin

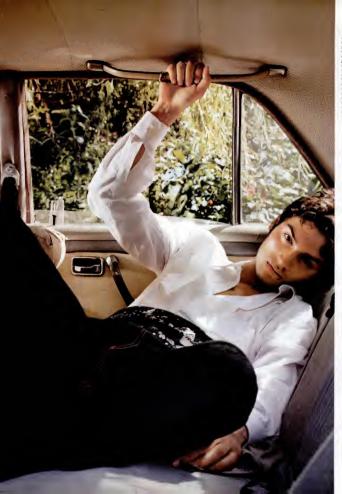






Brown long suede jacket with leopardprint celf-hair lining and boots, both by Doice & Gabbana; bag by Fendi; green and blue sequined silk shirt by Gene Meyer; green fur pants by Fendi; boots by Cesare Paciotti

Comments

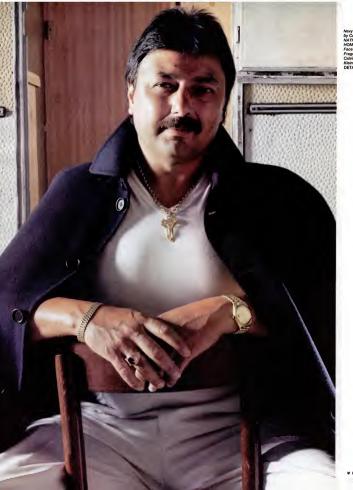


White longsleeve buttondown shirt, gray beaded cummerbund, black denim jeans with dark brown mink cuff, and boots, all by Dolce & Gabbana; car by Mercedes-Benz; 250 SE. Face & Body; Fragrance, Romance for Men by Ralph Lauren Olive cable zip-front sweater and olive wool knickers, both by Prada; mustard suede applique, mustard wool skirt, and boots, all by Prada; car by Mercedes-Benz, 250 SE





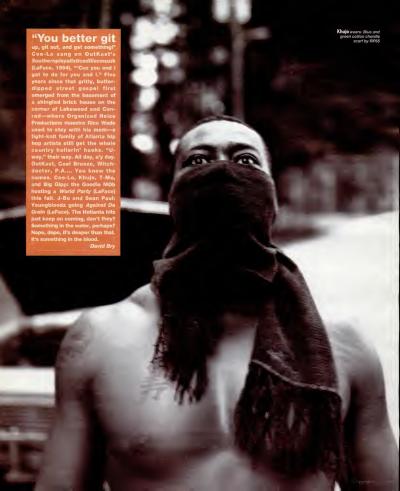
Gray embroidered and sequined sleeveless sweater by Dolce & Gabbans; green, red, and nude beaded camisole and sheer beaded tuille skirt, both by Giorgio Armani; gray long-sleeve T-shirt with fett-sequin appliqué by Gene Meyer; boots by Miu Miu



Navy wool cape by CoSTUME NATIONAL HOMME. Face & Body: Fragrance, Calvin by Calvin Klein. SEE THE DETAILS















You've got e-mil

THEME: WWW.HITTINSKINS.NOW

This fall's fashion forecast is all about an oldschool hip hop stapic: leather. Think Run-D.M.C., L.L. Cool J, and Big Daddy Kane. Try out these skins, and remember to keep your attitude tougher than leather. *Ernil Wil*

Black leather poncho by Tommy Hiffiger. If you wanna do the whole Zorro cape look, this poncho is sporty, chic, and mysterious. Khaki suede carpenter jeans by PMB Nation. The suede is soft and relaxed, and the fit is roomy. Note: They look fresh with Timberland boots.

Black leather biazer by Emporio Armani. Everybody needs a black leather biazer in his life—for work, plny, music video, whatever. Brown leather visor by Kangol. The leather version is strictly for hardcore hip hop heads or fashion leaders. Rock this visor with a fresh cut or 'do rag, and you're good to go.

SCOOP

laud for herce fashionisti

Fashion forecast: music and fashion forever

The trend of music and fashion commingling continues into the next century, as shown by these fashionable peeps.

Whitney Houston wearing Dolce & Gabbana in her World Tour '99.

Lenny Kravitz wearing Tommy Hitfiger on his North American Freedom Tour.

Blaque hooking up with Urban Decay and representing YDK, a special-edition lip gloss. Ricky Martin wearing Giorgio Armani,

e-style

III at: HipHopHut.com is for the true hiphop junkle. This urban shopping experience offers clothing from labels like Engree and Timberland, custom jewelry in platinum and gold, the hottest music on CD, tape, or vinyl. DJ and studio equipment for the musically inclined, and custom extreme bikes for the rougher side of you. Check it out:

Take off!

166 W 1 B 0

These one-press, compared where the second of the second o

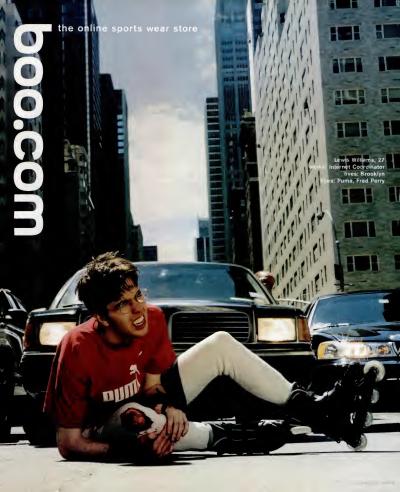
sneak peek

Air Ascent Range Mid by Nike, \$85

WHO: Those who roll with an entourage. WHERE: Vacationing with your folks in the mountains.

WHY: The function of a boot with the ber efits of a sneaker. SEE THE DETAILS Mimi Valdés





the Difference (1990), featuring hits like "Imagina," "This House," and "Tander Klasse." Almost 10 years later, Spencer returns a grown-ass woman with a naw album, Tracie (Capitol), and the single "It's All About You (Not About Ma).

PASHION FLASHBACK. "I was still a little girl on the last album, so [me and my family's] main priority was that I looked like one—not too made-up.... So I had the jean jacket with the decorations on it, bld, bld, crimed hair snrawd

down. But I just knew I was cute."
STOCKED INVESTMENT Handmixed Soothing Chamornia Crama
from Ole Hanriksen (an exclusiva
spa in Los Angelas, www.ofaface-

from Ola Hanriksen (an axclusiva spa in Los Angelas, www.olafacebody.com). "I carry four jars with ma, just in casa." MAKEUP MODUS OPERAND:

A neutral lip contrasted with a smoky aya. Tonly use Maka Up For Ever and Bobbi Brown. I love my eyes and highlight tham with liquid syeliner and a metallic gray shadow so they really pop. The sama way Jennifer Lopez does." BEXINT OF LISSINGS. TWY mom

is Creote and Indian, my dad is French Canadian and Panamanian. Thanks to my mom, I've never had any serious skin problems. She taught me to remove all makeup bafora bed, usa lamons in the bath as a natural astringent, and wash face with ice water in morning to wake up and lighten."

Spencer loves wearing essential oits like mango and lavender. But what does her boo lika?"My man likes plain of 'cocoa butter, He'il be like, 'Ooch, you smell good' What's hat?' Cocoa butter, that's it. As long as you have a scent, they're happy. You could smell like chicken, and they'd be like, 'Come'ere, girll'

Minus Ob





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The dictionary is da bomb!

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised

ack in the day, before "ebonics" was a word and a mind was still a terrible thing to waste, there was a bridge over the troubled water of illiteracy. That bridge was called the dictionary. A very simple concept: If you don't know a word, look it up. It's the only book in the world that if you're having trouble reading, you can learn to read by reading it!

With updates for the dos trey oh (such as: floss v 1: to clean between

the teeth with a fine string. 2: to display designer apparel or solid-gold rims to Impress), the biggest book of them all drops the revolutionary science that allows MCs not only to rhyme but also to make sense. Busta Rhymes isn't dope because he says "cataclysmic apocalypse,"

it's because he knows what he means. The dictionary is the shiznit.

ON THE SET WITH USHER 172 / BEST MAN TAYE 174 / TV'S BLACKOUT GETS FILLED IN 176 O.J. SIMPSON GIVES UP THE JUICE 178 / DREAD UNIVERSE 180 / GOOD VIBRATIONS 182

TASTER'S CHOICE EVERYTHING THE STARS CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

STAR JONES, vivacious cohost of the daytime talk show The View (ABC) • Favorite movie: All About Eve (20th Century Fox.

1950). Bette Davis is my girll [The movie] teaches you lessons about envy and lealousy. · Favorite gadget: Palm III Connected Organizer

(3Com). I keep all my addresses and memos (on it): I cannot leave home without it (below).

• Favorite website: I love Amazon.com. As a matter



of fact, I just bought the new Jackle Collins book, Dangerous Kiss (Simon & Schuster), from them. ◆ Favorite scent: Quelques Fleur

by Houbigant, I just came back from Paris with three bottles of it

but you can get it at Saks Fifth Avenue and Bergdorf Goodman. I've been wearing it for two years, it smells like gardenias



DANNY HOCH, star of the new movie Whiteboys (Fox Searchlight)

• Favorite movie: Follow Me Home (New Millenia Films, 1997), directed by Peter Bratt, It's a powerful hip hop generation film that was never widely distributed because there were no white lead characters and it wasn't a gangsta film. it's actually about us.

Favorite book: Hip Hop America (Viking Penguin. 1998), by Nelson George, It explains how and why hip hop is the most powerful culture at

the end of the millennium (right). · Favorite gadget: My old-school

Atari 2600. I got stupid cartridges! Stampede, Missile Command, and Kaboom are some faves.

Payortte CDs: Black Star's Mos Def & Talih Kwali Are Black Star (Rawkus, 1998), the Roots' Things Fall Apart (MCA, 1999), Black Eved Peas' Behind the Front (Interscope, 1998).

than listening to this cracker try to sound like Donny Hathaway.



POOTIE TANG, International man of leisure

· Favorite movie: Aww, my damie. That gotta be Suie You Pitty on the Runny Kind (Miramax, 1994), 'cause I'm all up in the dinie. And I'm sepatai on a lamacow!

• Favorite book: I read Pamalateepee Chaaaaaaaaiiii by Crighty Pooster (St. Martin's Press, 1978). it was all in the dall, 'cause he a pone tony, dee,



· Favorite TV show: I watch Menny Pine (NBC), Clappy Totomy Times (HBO), Say on My Dillie Paaaaaaaalacaca (PBS), and Everybody Loves Raymond (CBS). • Favorite weekend activity:

I just, you know,

baby...oh yeah...(left) What would you say if you could meet God: Um...Sa Da Tail

NAT X. host of NBC's Saturday Night Live late night talk show "The Dark Side

• Favorite movie: Blacula (1972, AIP), it was just nice to see a black vampire bite black people in a movie with the word "black" in the title. It's heautiful. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would be proud.

· Favorite book: I don't read books because I hate the fact that books have a big white piece of paper with little black letters. Until this injustice is corrected. I will remain Ignorant.

• Favorite cologne: Wite-Out. Not only is it great for spelling errors, but I've found that a dab behind your ears

will keep the white man at least eight feet away from you (right). Favorite CD: Michael Bolton's Greatest Hits 1985–1995. It's my favorite comedy CD. Nothing makes me laugh harder







SET TO POLL

What's My Name? Geppetto! On the set with Usher Raymond by Josh Levine

Flick: Geppetto (The Wonderful World of Disney), to be released next spring Who Dat: Drew Carey, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Brent Spiner, and Usher Raymond

original musical produced specifically for The Wonderful World of Disney retells the story of Pinocchio (voiced by Seth Adkins) from his father's point of view. Geppetto (Carey) learns that he has to love his little wooden boy in spite of his faults.

Wood Pecker: "We worked with Mike Westmore, the genius behind all the Star Trek prosthetics," says producer Mike Karz. "We spent months with different types of prosthetic noses, ears, and joints for Pinocchio's arms and knees. We think we

we can still capture the emotion of his look. but it's pretty clear that this is a puppet." Big Daddy: Tom Moore directs the cast, which includes hundreds of young What the Dilly: Geopetto, Disney's first boys and a couple dozen horses, donkeys, and goats.

Hot Spot: Shot entirely in Los Angeles, Geppetto takes place in three mythical lands-Bellagio, the "normal" land: Idvilia. where parents custom-create their kids by machine; and Pleasure Island, where little boys can do anything they want (eat a limitless amount of junk food, break windows. and draw on classic paintings). The Ringleader (Usber) uses this freedom to Jure boys onto his roller coaster, where they turn into donkeys and then have to work for him. How Usher Keeps His Cool: On all came up with a really distinct look where

of his sets (he was also shooting Texas Rangers [Dimension] and this year's Light It Up [Fox 2000] simultaneously), Usher requests banana splits.

Wet Dreamin': Usher says his version of Pleasure Island would be filled with Ferraris, Porsches, yachts, and mansions. "I'd have the biggest party on earth. I'd be able to do whatever I want, however I want, whenever I want."

Twisted Childhood Tales: In keeping with the theme of Pinocchio, Usher's parents used to tell him that if he lied, he'd get a lie bump on his tongue. "I never wanted to get a lie bump or my nose to grow, so I didn't lie. That's the way my parents kept me from lying. It's weird, because I actually got lie bumps on my tongue when I lied."



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moviereview THE BEST MAN (UNIVERSAL)

Spike Lee's cousin Malcolm D. Lee makes his writing and directing debut in this romantic comedy, which focuses on an up-and-coming writer (Taye Diggs) whose life falls apart at his friend's wedding. Diggs is embroiled in a love rectangle between his current girlfriend, the unrequited love of his past (Nia Long), and, curiously enough, his own semiautobiographical novel. Despite that seemingly complicated plot, the movie isn't as deep as it thinks it is. Stilli, Lee shows a strong ear for adult foibles and dialogue-

his characters are believable even when they're just talking typical vinyang about blackwoman-blackman issues, Wit, grace, and an impressive turn from Diggs ultimately save The Best Man.



movie review

BEING JOHN MALKOVICH (GRAMERCY)



inal directorial debut from alt-rock video kina Spike Jonze, this film is part sci-fi flick, part love exploration, part bizarre Satur-

dazzlingly orig-

premise: Office temp John Cusack accidentally discovers a magical portal leading directly into the mind of real-life actor John Malkovich. Any-

one who enters this passageway temporarily sees and feels everything the actor does. Naturally, this leads Cusack to sell tickets to the "Malkovich experience," but his scheme backfires when his wife (a pleasantly unrecognizable Cameron Diaz) not only becomes a Malkovich addict, but also falls in love with the lady Malkovich is screwing. Jonze handles this mental doozy with understated wryness while digging deep into the psyche of someone who wants to be a star (even when it means being someone else).

mavie review

WHAT U LOOKIN' AT (NIGGAFILMZ) fter several supporting roles in classic

films like Ride (Miramax, 1998) and Sprung (Trimark, 1997), and their breakout performance in Belly: The Director's Cut. Three Niggas From Brooklyn light up the big screen in What U Lookin* At. The movie is a coming-of-age tale about three young black men with baid heads, tattoos, and gold teeth, who kill people just for looking at them. This is Three Niggas From Brooklyn's finest hour. After this movie, no one will ever confuse them with Three Niggas From Queens or Three Niggas From the Bronx again.



ty crowned indie prince Adrien Brody stars In this Barry Levinson-directed dramedy about a small 1950s-era Baltimore neighborhood uneasily dealing with integration. But the real treat will be the



big-screen reemergence of Three's Company's (ABC, 1977-1984) Richard "Larry Dalias" Kline. We only hope he'll be rocking those polyester slacks.

LIGHT IT UP (FOX 2000)



sher Raymond ands a starring role in this high school hostage thriller after playing the margins of teen flicks like The

Faculty (Dimension, 1998). Featuring Forest Whitaker, Vanessa L. Williams, Rosario Dawson, and Fredro Starr, Light It Up follows a group of students who take a cop hostage after police gun down a local teen. But with Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds producing, expect more high-gloss drama than action high jinks.

EEL TO REA **NEWS FROM THE HOLLYWEIRD**

by Stephen Rebello



you can't get enough of Chris Rock, check for him in theaters later this year as the star of Warner Bros, ' highly touted animated flick Osmosis Jones. Rock voices Jones, a motormouthed blood cell who teams up with an insecure cold tablet (voiced by Frasier's David Hyde Pierce) to combat a virus out to infect a construction worker. An inside source says the project ("a kind of Fantastic Voyage [20th Century Fox, 1966] meets Who Framed Roger Rabbit? [Buena Vista, 1988]") may also feature Brandy as Rock's boo

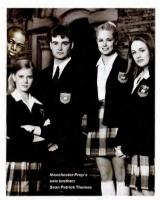
Rumor has it that Snoop Dogg could be hip hopping to the big screen as the star of New Line's Bones, in which he'll play a guy who returns from the dead to hunt down his killers. If the movie hits, New Line may well turn it into a series of supernatural action flicks.

Whitney Houston is producing an ABC Wonderful World of Disney musical about a 17-year-old aspiring singer with a guardian angel starring Monica. Sources say shooting could begin after the first of the year, but much will depend on whether Monica signs on for the musical Love Song, one of MTV's slew of movie projects that reportedly include the tentatively titled Hip-Hopera, a rap take on Georges Bizet's sexy opera Carmen (Dorothy Dandrige played the lead in 20th Century Fox's 1954 version, Carmen Iones). Meanwhile, Houston is also producing Disney's upcoming The Princess Diaries about a teen who learns she's royalty and has to take "princess lessons"

> from her tough-as-nails granny. Houston's appearance in this one may depend on whether she's ready to play a senior citizen. Don't hold your breath.

Jada Pinkett-Smith, missing in action since tanking with Woo (New Line, 1998), is now being talked up as the star of the topsecret Bamboozled, a new Spike Lee joint. A spokesperson from Lee's production company said judiciously, "Nothing's definite about casting at this timeall that's premature."





MUST-SEE TOKEN TV

Public outrage has networks scrambling for color

here's diversity on TV. Happy now? With the NAACP threatening legal action. and TV critics sharpening their pencils on the major networks' 26 ethnically impaired fall pilots, the suits at ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox are attempting to calm complaints with a rainbow coalition of new characters. Just days before meeting with the press at a national television convention in Pasadena, Calif., Fox introduced actor Sean Patrick Thomas to its all-white teen drama Manchester Prep. "I'm not just the token black guy," says Thomas, the series' new black man on campus. "The whole talk of diversity should focus on the quality of the role."

Few minority roles could be found in the fall TV lineup before the controversy. But protest has brought change: Minority regulars now appear on The WB's Popular, ABC's Once and Again, CBS's Judging Amy, and NBC's The West Wing, among several other new shows.

Why the sudden wake-up? "I haven't concerned myself with what's going on in the world," admits Kevin Williamson, creator of The WB's Dawson's Creek and ABC's new

drama Wasteland, Williamson added Soul Food's (20th Century Fox, 1907) Jeffrey D. Sams to Wasteland's previously all-white cast, "It's only after the NAACP comes along and says. 'It's time to make you all aware'-that's when I go, 'Okay.'"

Meanwhile, Jamie Kellner, CEO of The WB, defends his network's race record, "If you want to start taking percentages of the popula-tion, we're covered," he says. "It might not be the way you like it"-this season. The WB dumped its entire black sitcom lineup into the gutter of Friday-night television-"but we have been representative."

Of course, Hollywood's version of representation has always been far from genuine representin', "It's not about shoving someone down [the audience's] throat because they happen to be a person of color." says media scholar and activist Dr. Earl Ofari Hutchinson. "But did [the networks] go out to find any talented and competent people of color? How can they find something that they're not looking for?" Janice Rhoshalle Littlejohn

CHANNEL CHECK

My Neighbor Totoro

(Studio Ghibli, 1988)

Directed by Hayao

(Studio Deen, 1990)

Directed by Mamoru

Miyazaki

Patlabor 1

Mamoriae

(Akira Committee,

BFT Live From LA, hosted by former ComicView funnyman Cedric the Entertainer and Planet Groove's Caribbean beauty Rachel, promises to liven up late-night for viewers who were put to sleep by Keenan, Sinbad, and Magic, Artists like Sean "Puffy" Combs. will grace the stage along with performers who ordinarily get no love from Leno or Letterman. (Weeknights 10-11 p.m., 3-4 a.m., and 11 a.m.-12 p.m. ET.)



anime-nia!!! A beginner's guide to Japanese cartoon classics

Anime makes its leap into the mainstream this fall with the release of Princess Mononoke (Miramax), Japan's most popular domestic film of all time and the largest anime movie to hit the U.S. since Akira (Akira Committee. 1989) and Ghost in the Shell (Manga, 1996). Featuring Claire Danes as the voice of the title character, Mononoke (at right) offers a mythic story line and obsessively detailed animation. Here are some other greats: MOVIE & DIRECTOR



STORY

Satsuki, her little sister, and their dad move to the country to be closer to their depressed, sanitarium-bound mom, The film sets the stage for many childhood narratives to come.

Patlabor t follows an elite police unit responsible for watching over machines The drama starts when a programming elitch in robot laborers threatens mass destruction.

Memories is composed of three separate short stories. Taking cues from Dickens, one vignette follows a jilted lover who exiles herself aboard a spaceship.

It's classic Miyazaki, rife with metaphors of how technology and urban sprawl subsume a spiritual life with nature. One of the greatest anime films of all time.

Oshii is the top cyberpunk stylist out there. exploring the trope of robot consciousness à la Blade Runner (Warner Bros., 1982).

These kitschy, poetic pieces examine everything from the perils of idolatry to madcap adventures in industrial espionage.

SITEBITE

WHO: Ain't It Cool News WHERE: www.aintit-cool-news.com WHAT: News for film and TV junkies, Get the early scoop on what scripts and shows are being starring in what. Also,

check the site's irreverent film reviews and previews, or its discussion forums where you can get down with the latest Hollywood gossip.

WHY: "[People] like the attitude and the atmosphere," says Glen Oliver, one of the site's editors. "We consider ourselves decent people with decent tastes.... It's like a consumer watchdoo organization."

RELATED SITES: Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com), Mr. Showbiz (www.mrshowbiz.com) Joseph Patel

Various directors



Actress

If Head & Shoulders leaves my hair looking like this, why mess with a good thing.

You can never spot the ones who use Head & Shoulders.

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FRESHLY SQUEEZED JUICE

Finally, football legend O.J. Simpson gets pressed to answer the tough questions. By Chris Rock

hen you say the name O.J. Simpson, people react in different ways: anger, frustration, joy, and for some, indiference. O.J. Simpson is a lot of things. He's a father, an actor, and an author-then there's the thing he's best known for: being a running back. For the first time, VIBE is asking O.J. the questions we all want answered.

O.J., I hope you understand that I'm gonna ask you hard questions, so if you're not up to this you should leave now.

No, Chris, I'm gonna stay and face the music.

I think it's time people heard what I have to say. Good. The first thing I wanna know and the country wants to know is, where were you and what were you doing when Denver won this year's Super Bowl XXXIII?

That's easy. I was at home watching the game with my son Justin. I lost 10 bucks on Atlanta. I want you to think before you answer this next question. Can you explain to the whole world how you Buffalo Bills not so bad?

Hey, I wouldn't call them so bad. After going to four straight Super Bowls from 1991 to 1994, they got some low draft choices. All right, O.J., you're opening up. This is good. Now, if not you, who do you think is the best running back in football?

Well, it can't be me because I haven't played in 20 years. But if I had to go with one guy, I'd go with Terrell Davis. He's got the killer instinct. Stop it, O.J.! You've been playing games with the

Stop it, O.J.! You've been playing games with the public for too long. You're dodging the question! I'm sorry. I'm trying my best here.

All right, O.J., one last question. No more beating around the bush. Did you kill your acting career by starring in the Naked Gun series? No comment.



OFFTHE BOOKS

Susan A. Phillips gives gang graffiti a scholar's gaze

When you stumble across random writ-ings on a wall, realize that said writings aren't always about lewd ser acts or disrespecting someone's mother. These truths and more are illustrated in Susan A. Phillips's Wallbangin': Graffiti and Gangs in L.A. (University of Chicago Press). "I'm not trying to change anybody's negative views on graffiti," says Phillips of her comprehensive study, which explores graffiti's relationship to political change, race, and art. "My goal is to let people know that there's actually a lot of social information in graffiti." Yeah, fools, and there's also a big

difference between New York's nonterritorial "hip hop" graffiti and Cali's Chicano- and African-American-style gang scribing. Phillips, a UCLA anthropologist, has spent nearly 10 years in the fray of the spray, decoding 'hood hieroglyphics from Compton to Stockton. And even though set-trippin' has slowed since the '80s, Phillips maintains that gang graffiti will endure. "It's such a rich tradition," she says will continue to write "





on the well

optimistically. "There are gangs all over the United States, and they Sacha Jenkins

BOOK REVIEW

By Chris Rock

THESOAYS WITH MORRIE Well, the folks in publishing have done it again, Just when you thought they had noth-

ing more to offer then Men Are From Mars. Woman Where's My Slippers, they drop enother bomb. The book is written by Mitch "Smack My Bitch" Alborn, who's also a sportswriter for the Detroit



Free Press. You might remember some of his works like, "Yankees 9, Blue Jays 4," and who will ever forget "Mets 5. Cubs 8"? Anyway. Tuesdays With Morrie (Doubladed is the kind of book all of my hardrock-plays-baller niggas can get into, it's the story of a young pimp, Mitch, and the plays who taught him the game, Morrie. Mitch goes to Attica for 20 years, and when he ge out he learns that his old mentor, Morrie, is dving from Lyman Bostock

disease. Mitch decides to visit with Morrie every Tuesday. That way, when Morrie dies Mitch will be in his will. it's a beautiful story of love, life, and

LOCKS SHOTS!

Two Italian photographers explore the allure of dreads

readlocks once seemed the last bastion of pure black culture, an ethnic wonder too mysterious and too wild to be taken on by others. But like hip hop, dreads are now everywhere. They're even the subject of a new, upscale coffee-table collection of portraits,

Dreads (Artisan), The book includes an introduction by longtime locks rocker Alice Walker and demonstrates just how far the happyto-be-nappy movement has marched. thanks to Francesco Mastalia's and Alfonse Pagano's

stunning photo work. "Dreads have always been an incredibly sexy and powerful visual statement," Pagano says, "Now they're being co-opted by neonle all over the world." And judging by the more than 100 pictures on display, dreads are definitely on a world tour: People are locking in New Zealand, twisting in Tokyo, and matting way over in india, where the style is called jatta.

But newer heads still take cues from the originators-the Bastas

on the streets of Jamaica, where the style took root, and the brothers and sisters in Brooklyn N Y. So did the hairstyle's black legacy concern Dreads' white, middle-aged italian cre-

ators? "We worried about how people would react to us. it's not our culture," Pagano admits. "[But] people didn't seem to mind: they could tell our interest was genuine."

Nichole Christian

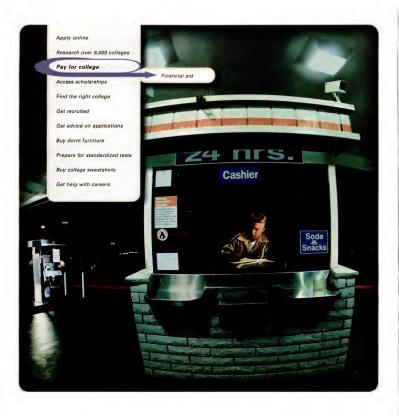
Aretha Franklin

Aretha: From These Roots

am Aretha, upbeat, straight-ahead, and not to be worn out by men and left singing the blues." So writes the Queen of Soul In her long-awaited autobiography, Aretha: From These Roots (Villard), in a sentence that serves as a pretty good summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the book's breezy 272 pages. Written in collaboration with renowned R&B chronicler David Ritz. Franklin seems so concerned with maintaining that "upbeat" attitude that she seldom digs deeper to reveal more complicated emotions. As a result, the late-'60s/early-'70s glory years of her Atlantic Records releases-among the greatest artistic explosions in American pop-fly by in a mere 50-odd pages. The book spends little time recounting the actual musicmaking process behind her classic albums, instead alluding to feuds with Gladys Knight, Natalle Cole, Chic, and Mavis Staples without giving readers enough information to assess what they were really about. Only when recounting Franklin's early influences (gospel greats like



Sam Cooke and Clara Ward) and her family life in Detroit (especially her relationship with her father, the internationally celebrated Rev. C.L. Franklin) does From These Roots rise to the kind of powerful feeling, the joy and pain, conveyed in her Incomparable singing. Alan Light



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HOLLA AT ME

If you ain't using this, you ain't gettin' through

ERICSSON R250d PRO "THE ROCK" \$299

Just how tough is the new rougher than rough cell yrom Ericsson? Wall it airt called "The Rock" for nothing. For starter, this delptal, analoug hone is water-resistant and dust-resistant (perfect for a final flood or beach party). Its nubbery casing can sally withstand being dropped on the sidewalls, or on your lide brother's cannium, without damage (bt the phone). In other words, it's the parfect all weather, all-terrain celly—or wapon.

Among its more between teatures are four hours of talk time (80 hours standby), vibrating alert, and data/fax capability. It even allows you to hold group conversations with as many as 30 people. Though it's three-plus ounces heftler then the ubliquitous Nokia 6100 Series cell, "The Rock" is still

parfect for those dialing up a life of adventure.

Mark Rooks

IT'S A VIBRATE THING

e seat (above) or the

an Mouse (below)

Who needs a loved one when headphones can keep you happy? By Kenneth Li

hether it's shaking your rump or making your heart pump, a range of new high sech gear aims to move you in ways cold hard metal and plastic never have. Sure, computer and electronics hardward edisjoner have let us cop a feel through vibrating pagers, cell phones, video game rumble packs, and en, vi pistrone. But demand for what's known as 'tactile feedback,' or the sensation of rouch, it seeping designers busiet than ever. "It's important to feel it and hear it, so you're part of the action,' aid Sherill Richard-

son, a marketing executive for Imeron, maker of the Intensor fx 350. The following give new meaning to "feel the vibe":

meaning to "feel the vibe":
Panasonic Brain Shaker
X-treme Shockwave
CD and cassette player

\$99.95-\$199.95

Bring bass to your face, literally, with Panasonic's line of ass-kicking, neck-shaking portable players. New technology translates bumping music signals to physical vibrations in your headphones.
Panasonic calls it VMSS (Virtual Motion Sound
System). Bass heads will call it salvation.
Page Dreamcast Jump Pack, \$24,99

Video-game junkies feel every collision and explosion with Sega's Jump Pack, which actually responds with corresponding pressure to the on-screen action. Without it, you might as well be banging away on yesterday's 12-bit jalopy.

Logitech WingMan Force Feedback Mouse, \$99,95 Why do gamers have all the fun? Logitech's new Wing-Man mouse will have your hand jiggling to sensenabled Web pages and

applications, making those

raunchier sites a lot more interesting.

Imeron Intensor fx 350 game seat, \$99.99;

Tactovest, \$39 (available by Christmas)

Hardcore gamers looking for more than

twitchy hands can rock their bodies with the Intensor portable game seat and optional rest, which provides

Hard Drive

New MP3 software organizes your musical life

Are you an analog person who still hasn't made the jump to digital music? Organizing and safe-housing your tunes on your PC or portable MP3 player is a snap with personal MP3 software like MusicMatch's Jukebox 4.1 and Net-media giant RealNetworks' Real Jukebox Players's a Sure of the personal MP3 software like MusicMatch's Jukebox Players of the personal MP3 software like MusicMatch's Real Jukebox Players of the personal MP3 software like like like MP3 software like like like

The free versions of each title let you encode CDs or download Internet music into decent-sounding digital form on your hard drive. Track listings can then be downloaded from www.cddb.com, a colossal music database. And for another \$29.99,

cal life

enhanced versions of both programs create true CD-quality results.

Real Jukebox Plus (hyww.real.com) lets

both programs create true CD-quality results. Real Jukebox Plus (www.real.com) lets you custom design funky-looking inter-faces, while Jukebox 4.1 (www.musicmatch.com) secole as the only player that will record off everything from vinyl to Gramy's 8-4rack, and it lets you preview music before you downlead. But both programs are super user-fittedly and

play popular audio formats like WAV and MP3. So what's your excuse for missing the digital music bus? M.B

IT KNOWS YOU LIKE RUNNING > OFF-TACKLE ON THIRD AND SHORT

Sega Dreamcast. SEGA SPORTS NFL 2K

OBSTINATE LITTLE TOOL AREN'T YOU? >







THESMOOTHGROOVE

IIIII THE WORD IS GIN IIIII



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REVENUE LUTIONS



But what's an artist to do when—and this is very clearly the case—his public persona transcends his work? When he becomes better known for being a fronti-page news story, or worse perhaps, a purchiling to a Jay Leng loke, then for his creative output.

This particular artist holes himself up in his place of work and delves deep into the furmioil and passions that surround and consume him. Deep his the seething anger and preving addiction, the brute strength and feetering disease, the lonely paranola and the sweat-direnched sexuality. You/now's stark like a motherfucker in that studio. He lets himself self his own power, his ability to frighten and neps but also become made and destroy. He emerges believing fully in his own mythology, swinging the hammer of the gods, spewing an inspired, obscenity-thick distribe against mankind and all its conventions. The legend has become the work. Of Dirty Bastrard's sophomore album, Nigga Plasse, is the biggest, buddeet, bedset, bedset, bedset, bedset, bedset, bedset, bedset, betset.

Long on musical arrangement, medicile structure, and Dirty's strained, emotional singing, Migap Revises is world, when to estaperties as in a "Barba Thin Eth, the scheme has Migh and to estaperties as in a "Barba Thin Eth, the scheme has Migh and to Republic and the scheme has been been better better better better better between the line between better bett

Those thoughts and words and phrases range from the ridiculously funny to the

NIGGA PLEASE IS THE BIGGEST, BADDEST, BEST RECORD OF THE YEAR—A BIBLICAL STORM SET TO FUNK BEATS.

harrowingly misogynistic. And of course, they tend to make a lot of people uncomfortable. Oi' Dirty is an upsetter. On purpose. He aims his danger directly at social codes and laws of behavior that many hold dear.

"You gotta make O'l Dirty / A better man / In the world if you wanns live," he singsongs over an imperial hom sampte on "You Don't Want to Fuck With Me." The tone mocks his detractors and their claims to some version of morally. His answer comes quick: "Fuck y'ali, God don't forgive... Hate is the method / Killin' all you savages / You won't be sending me messages!"

The sick beauty found within OT Dirty's frymes exposes and explores the relationship between man's baser instinct—the will resident chip between man's baser instinct—the will resident provided (i.g. perhaps even what we call "well" itself—and his ability to create vital and with more honesty and depth of vision than moet artists in any field are willing to devote to the task. After a black ringin' Sabbath bed heraids the coming plaspherry of "Pollin" Wif You," a descending that of minor—chord panonotes leads the listener down a stone-sab statistaces to hell. "It all with the turkin whole world down...," screams O' Dirty, "You reap what you sow if Fuckin' with the O' I got the priestess locked down / You artifusing the pop..... Insatered the demon's demontor loys / Shit-stath you will with the venom / Kill your joy!" Not since Ozzy Osbourne's heyday has a musical artist done evil so well.

But of course, O' Dirty isn't really will, (Neither was Ozzy, JN cone's that simple, anyway. To be seve, Aligga Please is as touching at times as it is offensive at others. "Stop thinking about being so harsh all the time to each other," he says softly while guest star Lil' Mo's version of the Billie Holiday standard "Good Morning Heartache" has everyone within earrhot welling up.

What O' Dirly is, though one will be a set of the common that the common that

WILSON PICKETT 'IT'S HARDER NOW' BULLSEYE/ROUNDER SMOKEY ROBINSON 'INTIMATE' MOTOWN





Sweet and sour. North and South. Love and lust. Soul music has always been based on two fundamentally opposing principles. And there are two singers who will forever personify the extremes of the classic soul man. The WWF couldn't have come up with a better contrast.

In this come, from Detroit, Mich., the faltest forball, original ling of the "Quiet Storm," Motorow 'poet Lustraes: Fronce Robinston Hand in the far come in in Partiville, Ala., the Midnight Mover, a Man-and-a-Half; the Wicked Wilson for Pickett II as happy coincidence, after lengthy absence from the recording such the two men who illustrate just how different music can sound and still say funky enough to be Labeld "RaB" are based with shockingly good albums.

Pickets! It! Handar Now, his first new release in 12 years, is both the stronger and the more surphing of the two, Judging from some ofhis recent performances, which could generously be called "erratic," it boggles the mind that producer, but the could generously be called "erratic," it boggles the mind that producer less have them come out sounding so focused, meaty, and robust. The best song there, like the title track and the opening. "Outskins of Four," regain the confidence and swagger of classic Pickett, setting his raw, powerful bank atop sturdy arrangements built to nold-school organ, horns, and a gububacke thythm soft part arrangements built to nold-school organ, horns, and subtubacke thythm soft with the confidence and swagger of classic Pickett, setting his raw, powerful bank atop sturdy on the confidence and swagger of classic Pickett, setting his raw, powerful bank atop sturdy. The organization of the confidence and swagger of classic Pickett, setting his raw, powerful bank atop sturdy arrangements built to nold-school organ, horns, and gather a "release" property of the confidence and swager or descriptions and an and also unnecessary, since Wilson Pickett could make a weather report sound X-raed.

Smokey Robinson's Initimate is his first new work in more than seven years. It marks not only his return to Motown fexcod—his home from 1958 to 1990; herecorded the label's first million-selling single—but also this first cratite collaboration with Mousem founder Berry Gordy Jr., who cowrote three songs, in Lord knows how long. Robin—100 is almost have always been remarkably consistent, and if there's nothing on Initimate that will stand next to "Cruisini" or "Being With 100 "much less Fhe Tracks of My Tearn"), nong like "Feelings Flowing" and "Easy to Lowe" are solid and satisfying in their own right. While the production least allite to he heavily on dated synthetizer washes and "omannite" thinky percussion, Robinson's voice is just as lovely, just as pure and clean, as ever. Almost unbelievable for ann nearins 66.

Years since their last hits, decades after their commercial peaks, Pickett, the southern shouter, and Robinson, the crooner from up North, prove that capturing emotion, whatever the emotion, at its furthest reaches, brings us to that hallowed place where the rhythm meets the blues.

Alian Light

Idaa Light

*

Menthol After Dark

ш അ Z Ô Q٥ B D Ġ 6 WENTHOL

15 mg "tar," 1.1 mg nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method. O PROp Monto Inc. 1999

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IT'S A SMOOTHER PLACE TO BE.

THIS IS AN A/B CONVERSATION

FLY TRACKS OR WACK WAX? ASK OUR RESIDENT CRITICS. A & B.



Mariah Carev featur-

ing Jay-Z A: How can lav-Z sound hard over this candy-ass beat? B: Who do you think would win in a wrestling match between ligga and Derek leter? A: [Roc-A-Fella CEOl Dame Dash would probably jump in. B: But Jeter has 23 fellow Yankees to back him up. A: This song sound's a little like "Fantasy," huh? B: Judging by the cover of this CD single. I bet Mariah is

the fantasy of a lot of 14-year-old boys. At Mariah's getting in the game with the teenagers. B: Yeah, she's a little too old to be doing a Britney Spears. A: Funny. Britney Spears is too young to be doing Britney Spears. B: He fooled me, I do like Jav-Z's rhymes on this sone, I'm not really digging this like I was "Fantasy," though. Remember the remix with ODB?
"Me and Mariah / Go back like babies and pacifiers"... He cannot be touched! A: Unless you're putting him in handcuffs.



B: I'm still waiting for his voice to crack. At I'm sure it's coming. B: He sounds very Maxwell Houseish A: He does sound like Maxwell, but I like this better than "This Is How We Do It." B: Aww. come on. That was the jam! "I was a lowercase G / Now I'm a big G." That's lyrical wizardry right there! A: This is definitely danceable. B: He could bring the hustle back with



this sone. At It does sound a little disco. But it has a little tropical thing going on too, B: Fiesta, Forever, A: Montell Jordan is the new Lionel Richie, B: Without the curly 'fro. A: I like the production, but the singing and the chorus don't do anything for me. B: This song has potential as a karaoke hit. We could do a remake. How's this chorus: "Ho-tel, Mon-tell, Holiday Inn" A: [Groan]

The Notorious B.i.G.



B: Oh man, this is that same "Al Green"jacked beat they used twice on Biggie's last album. And it's been used, like, a million times since then. A: It's so hard to make a song sound organic when you're adding the heat after the vocals have been laid Didn't he record these lyrics in 1994? B: "Humpin' around and jumpin' around." Wow. I just hope Bobby Brown and House

of Pain aren't on the album. A: Big's rhymes are so incredible. B: But the tracks have to live up...the beats should be off the meter. A: His voice sounded so different when he was young. B: His lyrics are way iller than Eminem's. A: It's frightening. There's so many intricate designs to his rhymes that you have to listen to them over and over again just to get it all. B: They should put out an a cappella album. Fuck the production. A: They got this classic Biggie rhyme and they put an all-too-standard 1999 beat under it. But I guess I prefer it to a Bruce Hornsby sample.



Na Be Like, Foxy Brown

A: "Nas Is Like," "Memphis Bleck Is ...," "Na Na Be Like." What's with all the self-definition? B: I'm just trying to figure out her picture in those Calvin Klein ads. A: She's rhyming in patois? B: At least she doesn't sound like Lil' Kim anymore. A: Did she just say "See my clit"? B: That's Foxy for you. A: This track is boring as hell. B: See va at the "Luke Warm Spot." A: Na Na be like... nothing new.

A: Kurupt's coming back that quick? He just dropped a double album last year. B: People slept on Kuruption! (Antra, 1998). A: I love Nate Dogg. I'm all for getting him back in action. B: "Five ounces of dope"? That's a lot. A: Not for the Dogg Pound. B: Is that why Nate always looks like he's not on this planet? A: Everything about this track is so staccato. It's different from the old smooth G-funk sound. It's probably a reaction to the whole southern



bounce thing. B: G-bounce? A: I've been waiting for a new sound to come out of the West for six years now. B: Everybody's waiting for Dr. Dre to come back out-then they'll just bite his style again. A: It's great Kurupt's getting back with Daz. B: I wonder whether Foxy's jealous.



Nine Inch Nalis

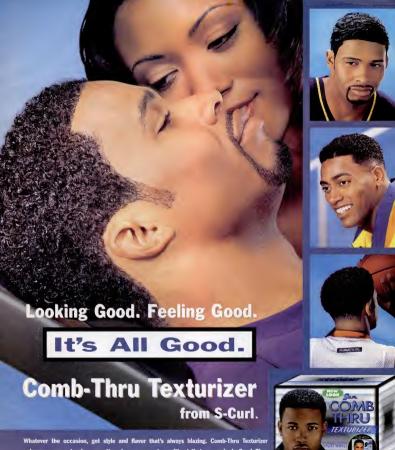
A: This sounds like Stone Roses. B: Very Blair Witch Project (Artisan, 1999). A: It's very atmospheric. It's almost like Trent Reznor's singing a cappella. B: Yeah, it would definitely work in a Listerine commercial. At I like when he does this type of slow stuff. When he has all those industrial beats behind him it drives me nuts. B: He's missing out on some great potential collaborations. Why

doesn't he do a song with Trick Daddy? "Nann meets NIN." It would sell millions. A: I did hear Reznor is doing something with Aaliyah. B: No way! A: Whoa, here come the guitars! B: It's a "My Bloody Valentine" rip-off. A: He's back to rock you. B: That was almost a song. A: What?! I liked it.

Noreaga featuring Capone, Angie Martinez, Jadakiss, Big Pun, Maze, and Mussolini

A: This is hot. I can't wait for the new Capone & Noreaga album, B: Why did they get Angie Martinez to say the hook? A: Yeah, I can't stand her voice, B: I'm a little tired of Big Pun, too. He's been on everybody's song lately. A: I love Nore, He's the greatest, but I still never figured out what "Gun trilogy / Gat strategy" means.





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BOOM SHOTS

The Undeterred by a sing national murder rate, recent bouts of rioting, and broadcast rumons of Bolu Banton's ideath, thousands flocked to Jamaica's Montego Bay this August for the seventh annual Regage Sumfers (proudly billed as "The World's Premier Regrae Murie Festival").

The six-day extravaganza commenced with the island's top four sound systems gathering for the traditional

"Heavyweight Countdown." A mountain of amplifiers brought forth bone-crushing bass and twinkling treble as Stone Love, Renaissance Dieco, Pure Playazz, and Adonal took turns rocking the crowd to estass."



Headliners Beenle Man and Bounty Killer certainly didn't disappoint, while new acts like the Hot Shot Grew, raggamuffin harmony quartet T.O.K., and the schoolgirl sensation Serial Kid emerged as full-fledged stars in their own right.

Tanto Metro and Devonte scored with their international hit "Everyone Falls in Love," and red-hot DJ Spragga Benz effortlessly executed his winning brand of dancehall specialities. The



cigar-chomping Demus Family featuring the original ruffneck chicken,

sicken, saur land sald the

feathers in their felt bowlers).

His locks wrapped in a shining gold turban, show-stealer Capteron sprung onstage and called down brimstone and fire on Babylon. An arena full of

Bic lighters and aerosol torches blazed as the DJ fanned the flames with a smile.

But the festival's defining moment came on the final night. R&B trio
Dru Hill had blasted off their last pyrotechnic device. Beres Hammond had
completed his musical seduction of 10,000 hearts. Dennis Brown's beauti-

fal children stood backstage, patiently awaiting the tribute to their late faths. A rambling thunder rolled in the distance and lightning thunder rolled in the distance and lightning bolts zagged from cloud to cloud across the horizon, a very much alive Buju Banton wrenched awarntor cyf from his guit "Justice," he cried, "Oh, God! We need a little bit of justice." Then the familiar guitar strums of "Untold Stonies" announced the gathering som. The crowd jused in which prompting. "While! I'm living, to the Father! will pray." Ohly he know how we get through every day."



sang every voice as the artist held his mike skyward. "What is to stop the youth from get out of control?" With the question hanging in mid electrified air, Banton offered the only available answer: more music.

HEAVY ROTATION: More reggae flavor

CARCOLL WILLIAM TO THE (Resin)

ARTOLL WILLIAM THE TIME (Techniques / VP)

THE Journey (Gee Street/V2)

ACOUSTIC Dencehall Xplosion '99 Mega Mix (Jamdown)

Praises (VP)

MARILYN CANNOVA 'OPERA LIKE A MUHFUCKA' FROM THE LUNGS





What's up with Marilyn Cannova? Her latest CD (and what most thought would be her last), Opera Like a Muhfucka, recently became the highest Bill-board-charting opera CD in history, leaving opera lovers everywhere baffled.

After all, Cannova's first album, Arias di Figero (From the Lungs, 1997) sold a mere 4,000 copies. And the rescord album, Cosi Fare Third (From the Lungs, 1998), sold only two copies (that's right, 1000), a disaster even by opera standards. So what the dilly with Opera Like a Mubfincha selling 14 million copies just two weeks out of the box?

As an opera fanatic myself, I'd like to believe her success is due to the resurgent popularity of Gaetano Donizetti, Richard Wagner, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. But I doubt it. When you're moving upward of 10 million units, you're not just selling to your everyday opera fans. You're reaching hip hop fans, country and wester flass, and probably primps.

Ewen critics are seeing. Cannova in a new light. One prominent opera critics are seeing. Cannova in a new light. One prominent opera critical warmth. 70 Gpora Like a Muhjuka, he wrote, "I Gound myself jerking off to [Franz Joseph Haydin." Gillaling as her nies is, and however one may feel about her, the bottom line is that Marilyn Cannova is a conewoman juggermant.

KANE & ABEL 'RISE TO POWER'



Twins David and Daniel Garcia, better known as Kane & Abel, have finished their tour of duty in the No Limit army. After releasing 1996's The 7 Sins and last year's Ani IMy Brother's Keeper? on Master P's label, these solidiers have received their honorable discharges.

Lately, the duo—who also wrote a book of fiction, Eyes of a Killer/Behind Enemy Lines (Griffin, 1999)—have been

fighting batties outside the realm of entertainment, including charges of drug possession with intent to distribute.

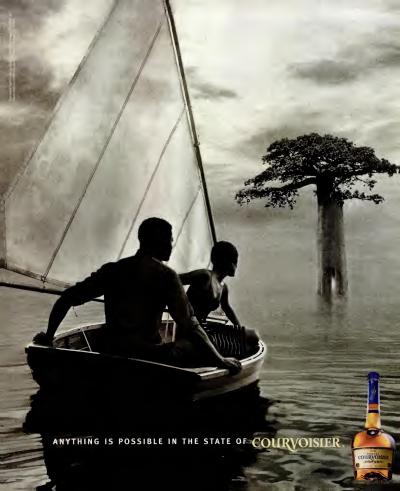
But that hasn't stopped them from making music. Kane &

Abel are now enlisted on their own label, Most Wanted Records.
Unfortunately, the company's first release, *Rise to Power*, suggests these siblings may be better suited to civilian life away from the microphone.

"Beat It Up" is guaranteed to give your ears a sonic beatdown. The clutter of pitch-bending synth effects, a fillings drum track, and the duois featherman attempts to piece words together make for a quick three strikes. After hearing "Let "Em Come," you'll be holieiting" "Make" em go!" Having to alt three lines (ike "Got more pussy than a Pointer Sister" should garner listeners. Purine Hearts.

Although Rise to Power was produced mainly by No Limit's Beats by the Pound, Kane & Abel are unable to recapture their glory days as part of Master P's camp. Hackneyed lyrics and tracks fail to give the album the boost it needs for liftoff. Miguel Burke

190 W I B I





"GET NONE"

The hot single featuring
J.D. & AMIL

Produced by Jermaine Dupri



ASTISTIC CONTROL MANAGEMENT INC. 1000 SEC May 11 C annu harmonic com II

TERROR SQUAD 'TERROR SQUAD'

It's hard not to root for Fat Joe. The Bronx, New Yorker spent years as an underground rap underdog before discovering a fellow borinqueño heavyweight. With verbal skills as massive as his body, Joe's find, Big Pun, debuted in 1998 with the platinum-selling Capital Punishment (Loud).

Riding the wave of momentum supplied by his protégé, Joe finally struck gold with his third try, Don Cartagena (Atlantic, 1998). Now as his



crew, Terror Squad (Joe, Pun, Cuban Link, Prospect, Triple Seis, and Armageddon) release their self-titled full-length, the MC/entrepreneur is once again banking on his eye for talent to pay dividends.

Big Pun, rapping and singing, shines over the tasty violins and face-pounding drums of "Whatcha Gon Do?" Bolstered by a creepy, hollow-sounding

piano, "Bring it On" features Fat Joe going for dolo in vintage form: "Come at us if you're ready for war / Whoever you are / Leave you dead in your hall/ Lesking red on the floor."

Unfortunately, such stellar moments are few. By mid-album, many of the tracks start sounding the same—a betrayal of the lesser-known Terror Squadlans' distinctive flows and charismatic Latin linguistics. Let's hope Joe and his compatriots change production teams before coming out with solo efforts. If not, we'll be calling them the Not-So-Scary Crea

Elliott Wilson

MINT CONDITION 'LIFE'S A OUARIUM' ELEKTRA

Have you ever told a woman her yes were "so beautiful it's breaking my heart? Lines like these from Mint Condition (Rickly Kinchen, Ken Lewis, Jeffery Allen, Homer O'Dell, Lawrence Waddell, and lead ringer Stoldey Williams) suggest that either these are its of the most incere brothan on the plant or that we've all been suckered by some airright game. With their tensitive, seductive songs, the Minneapolis band's first threat eilbums—Meant to Be Mint (Pempective, 1994), From the Minte Fattern/Pempective, 1994), and Defensition of a Robin Conference with the Minter Rickly Pempective, 1994 and the situation of the Minter Rickly Pempective, 1994 and the situation of the Minter Rickly Pempective, 1994 and the situation of the Minter Rickly Pempective, 1994 and the situation of the Minter Rickly Pempective, 1994 and the situation of the Minter Rickly Pempective, 1994 and 1994 and

Their latest endeavor, Life's Aguarium, is an eclectic mix of songs deal- "110 W" ing with the trials and tribs of intimacy and romance. All the while, the sextet provides varied musical backdrops, including rock guitar by O'Dell on "Leave Me Alone" and flamenco flavor on "Spanish Eyes" (which features vocals in Spanish and English and English Company of the Com



But the group that brought us the gold singles "Braking Wy Heart (Perty Brown Eyes") (1991). "U send Me Swingin" (1992), and "What Kind of Man Would I Be?" (1996) couldn't have a complete album without more enchanting ballads. As soft accounting uitars play in the background on "Just the Man for You," Williams gently croons, "Tin just the man for you in every way / Could it be heaven sent you just for me, too / Casue, bub, "Im for you."

After hearing those caressing words, it doesn't matter whether Mint Condition are genuine or laying mack down—as long as they keep stroking egos, we'll keep playing their songs.

Raqiyah Mays

192 V I B B

2,500-20

SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS 'RECONCILIATION'ZIMC



Trying to be all things to all people is hardly a recipe for integrity, but the 40-member collective Sounds of Blackness make a righteous effort. On their fourth album, Reconciliation, the inspirational group reflects as much musical and cultural breadth as its name suggests. To accomplish this, the 28-year-old outfit draws equally on tradition and new blood.

Longtime member and music director Gary Hines has enlisted several gifted young singers who tackle a wide array of lite-jazz-inflected ballads, midtempo funk exercises, and sprightly hip hop-soul workouts. "Thank You" has the pristine prettiness of a Disney love theme.

with Billy Steele crooning lushly alongside Amy Petersen, her fluttery soprano recalling Deniece Williams. "24 & Back Again" is sexier grown-up fare, featuring a hard-thumping bass line and sultry lead vocals by Carrie Harrington. But ultimately, most of these songs share one basic, empowering message, summed up by titles like "Love Will Change Things" and

"Dreams." On "Reconciliation." the singers beseech us. "Put your differences aside / The time has finally come to live in peace." The group's prescription for harmony and unity may not be an original one, but, delivered with their trademark grace and gusto, it sounds like just what the doctor ordered. Elvsa Gardner

LOST BOYZ 'LB IV LIFE' UNIVERSAL

With the slaving of Lost Boyz member Freeky Tah eerlier this year, questions erose as to whether the Queens, N.Y., rappers would in fact be lost without their hype men or would still be able to make us dance.

On their third album. LB IV Life, Mr. Cheeks, Spigg Nice, and Pretty Lou successfully continue the club-rocking tradition they set with their first two LPs, Legal Drug Money (Universal. 1995) and Love Peace and Nappiness (Universel. 1997). Tab. who recorded voceis before he was

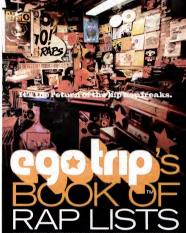


up end giving the album that vintage LB vibe.

But the party does come to an occasional halt. On down-spirited selections like "Can't Hold Us Down," the Lost Boyz dwell too much on stressful situations and lose their touch for aural stimulation

Produced chiefly by newcomer Raiph Lo, LB IV Life does show sonic diversity. "Ghetto Jiggy" successfully uses a smooth bass line and blaring trumpets to enliven the hook, "Ghetto liggy / Niggas where you from / New York City / The spot where we keeps the whips pretty / Bitches and these cops act shitty." Bangin' straight off the block, "We Got That Hot Shit" reaffirms the Lost Boyz' position as grassroots MCs.

Cen't you just imagine Tah now? Partying up above while singing, "This is how we do / Together forever with my whole crew." Charisse Nikole



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Joe Levy, Music Editor, Rolling Stone

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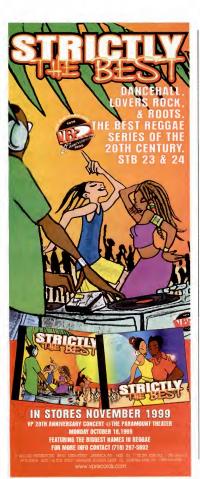
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CHICO DEBARGE THE GAME' MOTOWN



If it weren't for Chico DeBarge, contemporary R&B would be almost completely yold of a working-class consciousness. The genre is filled with sappy sugar daddies who can afford to woo the ladies with fine wines and lobster dinners, keys to the Bentley, and trips to the Bahamas.

That's why Chico is the man. He represents for the brother in the mail room. the ex-con trying to do right, the guy who, as he sang on 1997's "No Guarantee," wants to buy you diamonds as soon as he gets an increase in pay. On his third outstanding offering. The Game, the Grand Rapids, Mich.-born

keyboard-caresser digs back into relationship psychodrama from a bluecollar perspective. Check the smooth-groove title track. On what could be considered a prequel to labelmate Erykah Badu's 1997 hit "Other Side of the Game," DeBarge's trial-worn tenor sings, "I just lost my girl in a heated argument / 'Cause I couldn't afford to pay / The mutherfuckin' phone bill and rent."

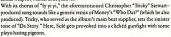
The album hits a snag, though, with its remake of Marvin Gaye's 1982 "'Til Tomorrow." Like so many previous pretenders to that particular throne, DeBarge lacks the pipes and the pathos required for such an endeavor. Still, while he may not be ready to touch R&B royalty. DeBarge can hold his head high when he walks among the people. Craia Seymour

SOLÉ 'SKIN DEEP' DREAMWORKS

From her cameo in I.T. Money's video "Who Dat?," we know Kansas City, Mo.'s Solé is a looker. From the way she flaunts her shapely, silver-painted body in the sensual ads for her album, Skin Deep, we know she's not afraid to take her clothes off. But then, that can describe many of hip hop's mistresses of ceremony.

So, what about her debut CD separates Solé from the rest of the pack? If ludicrous rhymes like "I'm that niggas-want-to-eat-me-on-my-period bitch" (from "Iy Yi Yi") are any indication, nothing much.

Skin Deep is as original as another Lethal Weapon (Warner Bros.) movie.



tone of "Da Story." Here, Solé gets provoked into a clichéd gunfight with some playa-hating pigeons. She does attempt to inject some maturity into her pretty-thug-bitch shtick on "We've Been Trying Too Long." Featuring Montell Jordan and Goodie MOb's Big Gipp, the track is undoubtedly Skin Deep's most sincere statement. Solé and her boo

call it quits over a melancholy R&B setting. On her next album, Solé should think about distancing herself from the rest of hip hop's tough-talking chickens, or she'll be saying so long to her career.

Митрь

OH, WORD?

THE EARLY BIRDS GET THE WORD ON UPCOMING RELEASES (All information subject to change at the artist's alightest whim)

With seemingly every other R&B song penned and produced by the same handful of ralented names, from MISSY Elliott and Timbaland to

Puffy to Trackmasters, the radio airwayes are starting to sound like one long Swizz beat or variation on a Darkchild theme. But the spring of 1000 was marked by the grand entrance and subsequent musical invasion of the songwriting and production team of andi Burruss

and Kevin Site Pepere' Briage. You may remember Burruss as one fourth of the Atlanta foursome

Xscape. She enjoyed three platinum albums with the group but had little chance to flex her skills outside of the vocal booth. "I started cowriting some songs on the second Xscape album [1995's Off the Hook (So So Def/Columbia)]," says Burruss, "But we didn't get the opportunity to really write our own material because I don't think **Jermaine Dupri** trusted us to write. He didn't think we had it in us."



Well, vapors became the catch of the day when Burruss found ber soul mate in Long Beach, Calif.-bred, Atlanta-transplant She'kspere. With her card-pullin' lyrics and his easyrollin' melodies, their songs-"No Scrubs" from To's FanMail (La-Face) and "Bills, Bills, Bills" from Destiny's Child's The Writing's on the Wall (Columbia)-hijacked the top spots on Billboard's pop and R&B charts. The two also penned a number of other songs on the Destiny's Child album.

It's no wonder that Burruss and She'kspere are now music-industry money in the bank. Even Burruss's own upcoming solo album on Columbia is taking the backseat to the overwhelming demand for the duo's work. Among the artists lined up: new acts Pink (LaFace's Caucasian soulstress), JoJo Robinson, and Before Dark, as well as proven stars Mva. Montell Jordan, Jay-Z. Toni Braxton, Babyface, and 'N Sync. They're even creating their own brand of world mus for an upcoming sine ad O'Connor

album and using cutting-edge technology to record a newsong for **Mariah Carey** called "Fx-Girlfriend" Rurruss and She'kspere will work with Carey via satel-

lite while she vacations in Capri, Italy. So how do you top that? Well, the pair hope to soon conquer a totally different genre of music-country. She'kspere admits he'd love hooking up with Garth Brooks. "I have country songs that I'd ike to work on with a big country artist, says Burruss. "I don't listen to just R&B or straight pop. I'll go out and buy a



Shanla Twain album too." We bet Twain's among those vibing with Burruss and She'kspere-and askin' her man, "Can you pay my bills? Can you pay my rodeo bills, can you pay my pickup-truck bills? If you did then maybe we could chill...

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CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE

Three is the magic number for an MC named Planet Asia. The Fresno, Cali.-bred, San Francisco Bay Area transplant plays hardworking Mr. Dynamite this month by appearing on a triumvirate of matchill and the company of the same of the sa

aroworking Mr. Dynamitet of worthwhile releases. Originally available on Laid in Full (Blackberry, 1999)—the fine, M. Boogie-navigated compilation featuring most of the key figures in the contemporary Westside indie circuit—Kut Masta Kurt's

"Bringin' It Back (Remix)"

(Blackberry, 818-891-3415) reconfigues bionic venes from Asia and fellow
rhyme regulator 427 smack-dab in
the middle of a freaky, flutte-flutted
audio liftoff. Stones Throw Records
big cheese Peanut Butter Wolf also
presents a melodic redefinition of
Asia and Lootpack beat merchant
Addib's "Definition of Ill (Remix)"



(Stones Throw, www.tonenthrow.com). Here, PBW waps the criginal's Company Flow-like abrasions for a smoother arrangement of wibes that still lives up to the title. But as Vanessa L. Williams might say, we always save the best for last. The Evidence-produced *Place of Birth *(ABB, 50:40-9966) Forecents the robot-arg renegade dolo, spitting clipped, aggravated assaults amid a furious frenzy of sound effects culled from originis unknown.

Biocastal DJ/producer/graf student Superstar Quanatlah's np career was something of an accidental bint's After completing the beats on a drom intended for a friend to rhyme over, the Ph. D. candidate (in "hip hop" ... only at Betklery, fingly' cut his own vocals in demonstration of how the finished songs should sound. The project fell through, but Quam eventually realized his original ventions were strong enough to release on their own. The thresided single, "Just Rap"." Properly Done". "Wit It" (ABB), takes its drivingle leaf track from last year? Done T. Gatt Micho EP and adds a new pair of ominous, slice 'n dice productions (with longtime associate Swahili sharing mike time). On "Wi It," Quan explains his brand-new bag: "Cost a new trade I'll major witt' It's called rhymin'? Bet you suckers wish you stayed wit it." Watch these rap scholars get all up in your gust!

Finally, A.B. of Showbis. & A.G. fame, exhibits himself to be not only a giant in the mental, but a giant in the guest role with his id-back asist on Philly wordsmith Kemach's latest, "The Meanin". (They Don't Know)" (Readyrox, 88-85-yen)89, A hauming justra and piano loop, and the tubiquious DJ Revolution's preciseast scratch embellishment set things up lovely for Andre the Giant to spark some wonderful non sequitur widom. There's a meaning to this, like in every story / But this one is over birches, drugs, and territory / So where who sea H' Killer Kamach himself adds some pertinent advice for all the sideline spectators. "Don't wanna hear you heard about my record / Support he wast!" You heard the man.

HEAVY ROTATION:

"Say it Twice" (Fat Beats, 212-965-1862)

"Cali Expert" (The Union Label/Buds Distribution, 212-378-8848)

"Inhuman Capabilities" (Brick, 800-567-9312)

"inhuman Capabilities" (Brick, 800-587-931

"Tha Rich Gat Rich"

(Raptivism, 212-802-9148)





"My name will stand forever in rap like the Acropolis," yells Ice-T on his new album, 7th Deadly Sin. It's true that after 12 years, seven albums, and numerous movie and TV appearances, L.A.'s original OG has made an everlasting impression not only on hip hop, but on the entire world of showbiz. (Who could ever forget Ice kicking game in hair rollers on HBO's prostitution documentary, Pimps Up. Ho's Down?)

Deadly Sin is Ice's first foray into music since his (really) disappointing 1996 effort, Return of the Real (Priority). The Javoff seems to have done him well. In true mack form, he re-returns as tight as ever. Staving away from the obvious laid-back gangsta grooves, new producers such as DJ Ace and Mad Rome supply the album with a darker, tension-filled sound more

a often associated with East Coast hip hop. Lyrically, Ice has kept his chops up. On the title track, he goes line for line with such acclaimed mike controllers as Ras Kass and Tha Alkaholiks' Tash. And on "Don't Hate the Plava" the old don schools the young sharks: "Some come up / Some get done up / Accept the twist / If you're out for mega cheddar / You gotta go high risk."

While the permed playa-most may have passed the proverbial torch to younger counterparts years ago, some things in the game never change. Fans of the real rap will always hold a warm spot in their hearts for the ice-cold MC.

Charlie R. Brayton

MIDNIGHT STAR ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION



Back when hip hop and Ricky Martin were just infents, the nine Kentuckybred members of Midnight Star mede impeccable, irresistible music to move to. Though not as well known as some of the bands they toured with during the late '70s and early '80s-groups like Rick James & the Stone City Band, Kool & the Gang, and Maze featuring Frankle Beverly-Midnight Star created some of the most intense techno rhythm 'n' funk of the era.

Their 1984 hit "Curious" is a near perfect bite of mid-tempo tenderness. The previous yeer's "No Parking on the Dence Floor" (along with 1984's "Operator" and 1986's "Headlines") harkens back to all those great "theme" songs of days gone by: "Excuse me, medem / You're stending still in a no-parking zone / If you don't get a move on that body / I'll be forced to give you e ticket / So get with it!" Midnight Star were the coolest traffic cops you ever met.

This hot little disc'll take you beck to the sweetlest postgeme dences you choose to remember-those DJ-driven nights that would start with Run-D.M.C.'s 1984 perty-rocker "It's Like That" and creep to an end with a last-minute grind to Midnight Star's "Slow Jam" (1983). Back when it got so hot in there you hed to do like the band advised: Go to the bar and "Wet Your Whistle." Denyel Smith



FROM HER ACCIAIMED GROUP VERTICAL HOLD TO HER PLATINUM WORK WITH LENNY KRAVITZ AND D'ANGELO, ANGIE STONE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SINGULAR CREATIVE FORCE.

"ANGIE STONE WILL STAND PROUD TO BECOME A GRANDE DAME OF THE R&B WORLD IN THE NEXT DEGIDE" -BILLBOARD

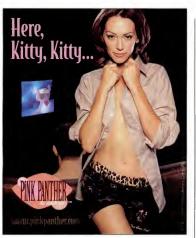
"ANGIE STONE IS POISED TO TAKE CENTER STAGE: -INTERVIEW

> HER DEBUT SOLO ALBUM FEATURES
> "NO MORE RAIN
> (IN THIS CLOUD)"









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THREE NIGGAS FROM BROOKLYN 'NIGGA SHIT' IS NENT RECORDS

Rap group Three Niggas From Brooklyn, composed of NiggaWhat, NiggaWho, and NiggaRace (pronounced nigga-RAH-chi), do one thing effectively on their debut album, Nigga Shit: They bore the shit out of listeners.

The Niggas' debut lacks creativity and reveals their complete lack of talent. Listening to the threatening leadoff single, "Hey Nigga (You Better Buy This or Ah Mo Whup Yo' Ass)," I'm not sure



whether the trio is trying to intimidate rap fans into purchasing this wack record or pleading with us to believe their tired-ass Glock-toting, true-thug, fuck-tha-

chickenheads image. Either way, Nigga Shit is beyond ridiculous. All of the song titles contain the word "nigga," as in "Nigga Boo," "Nigga This, Nigga That," "Who Dat Bitch Nigga?" By the time I reached track five, the cacophonous "Nigga Larry (Sho Is Scary)," I was numb. And mind you, this is in spite of the stellar tracks supplied by Aspen, Colo., production team the Beat Biters. On "When a Nigga Shoots His Nigga," the Biters do a spectacular reworking of Puffy's reworking of the Police's "Every Breath You Take" by looping Jay-Z's "Hard Knock Life" into their own interpretation of Broadway hit "Oklahoma!"

NiggaWhat, NiggaWho, and NiggaRace are an insult to true hip hop, and they clearly chose this path to avoid getting real jobs. It just goes to show that you can take a nigga out of Brooklyn, but you can't take the Brooklyn out of shit. And these three niggas are shitty indeed.

GERALD LEVERT '(G) THE ALBUM' ELEKTRA

With all the time Gerald Levert spends in recording studios, you have to wonder when he gets the chance to experience some of the things he sings about. Since 1986, Levert, either as a solo artist or pert of e group, has dropped 11 albums (six in the past

four years).



His latest triumph. (G) The Album. picks up where last year's Love & Consequences (EastWest/Elektra) left off, addressing the challenges and rewards of maintaining relationships. The seductively slick LP is full of deftly syncopated, state-of-the-street arrangements that are offset by candid, nicely gritty lyrics.

Against the warm guitars of "She Done Been," Levert's gruff, burnished tenor paints a vivid portrait of a woman's struggles. On "Application (I'm Lookin' 4 a New Love)," the

G-man invites women who want to get with him to sign on up. However, there's e catch-some prerequisites have to be met ("I need a woman with a job / ...a crib / ...e ride / ...no kids").

Some of the best moments on the elbum, though, ere relatively light: the giddly romantic "Baby You Are," for instance, with its Prince-like strains of tender falsetto. Or the aggressively carnal "Callin' Me," on which Levert croons. "I'm so wet I'm about to drown." His old man, Eddle Levert, was never that blunt in his O'Jays heydays, but Gerald's moonstruck spirit seems es familiar as a classic love song, and as timeless.

Elvsa Gardner

HANDSOME BOY MODELING SCHOOL 'SO... HOW'S YOUR GIRL?' TOMMYBOY



Children dream away. Some kids want to be firemen. Some want to be astronauts. Others want to grow up to be model-be-abufful like 'Fyra Banks, teupled like Tyson Beckford. These rarefied humanoids look good even when they're taking out the trash. And they greated to look good when they take out the trash! Modeling sounds pretty yunmy, huh?

With the nunway hopefuls of the world in mind, producers/DJs Prince Paul (of Stetsasonic, De La Soul, and Chris Rock fame) and Dan "The Automator" Nakamura (the beat-maker behind Dr. Octagon) concocted 36... How's Your Gitt-a melodic brochure that sings the praises of the twosome's new venture, the Handsome Boy Modeling School.

So...Ho
Face" ar
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So...Hous' Your Girls' narrative is sewn together by "Look at This "Face" and "Modeling Sucks," Blook skit tunes feature the ranning good of the strength of t

him open ("Bring your beautiful face and a check for \$60..."), while "Modeling Sucks" delivers a peeved Elliot declaring, "I'm a male model, not a male prostitute!" over the ever famous, always ominous string-section strains of Ludwig Van Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Ooh, la la!

Outside of said two joints, though, supermodel chatter is nil. Handsome Boy's motto seems to be "Express the gorgeous inner you—through music." So the institute's many musically inclined students collaborate with their instructors in between wardrobe channes.

The results' Gorgous. On "Magnetizing," atop a gummy-as bass line, San Francisco Bay Arte represented Del lest listeners know that he doesn't like it when "a lot of MCs ride my privates." Brand Nubian's Grand Twba and Sadat Xge trazuy luturulous on "Once Again"—Pu punches like "Chickens ride the pony 'cause the rhyme flow's Ginuwine' work particularly well with the track's weeked electric organ and skulls nanppingly simple forms. "Waterworld" for metaphors while a liquid ya Rkim sample washes over his stout verbals. Kevin Costner must be proud.

Handsome Boy pupils love to bug out, and Cibo Matto's soft-pop-loving Miho Hatori does just that Her performance on "Metaphysical" is more Kool Keith than Keren Carpenter. Then there's "The Truth," where Moloko frontwoman Roisin sings in a seductive lounge styley over happily sullen piano chords and underground B-boy hero J-Live app his Haitina ass off.

There's only one way to describe the songs of the HBMS: futuristic R&B for hip hop fiending robots. Get with it. Tomorrow is today. Paranoid androids like designer icans too. Sacha Inkins.

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1. Isn't it ironic that the NAACP is mad because there aren't enough brothers on Cops? 2. Don't you hate having to wait two, sometimes three days before a new Samuel L. Jackson movie is released? 3. Speaking of movies, who can wait for the sequel to Wild Wild West? 4. Wasn't Nas's performance in Belly the most spellbinding piece of acting we've seen since Melle Mel in Police Academy 6: City Under Siege? 5. Can you believe talk-show host Larry King gets paid for doing that easy shit every day? 6. Wouldn't it be great if Russell Simmons, the godfather of hip hop, started rapping? 7. Could someone please explain to us exactly what Kirk Franklin does? 8. Are we the only ones waiting for Hammer to appear in an Old Navy commercial? 9 How about Ol' Dirty Bastard, whose aliases include Big Baby Jesus and Osiris, renaming himself "Evil Ka-Nigger"? 10. Why isn't there a rule that says Julian Lennon actually has to have made music before he can appear in VH1's Behind the Music? 11. Is Shyne to Biggie what Dana Dane was to Slick Rick? 12. Why is Cedric the Entertainer the funniest person on The Steve Harvey Show? 13. Does Chico DeBarge's trying to sound like D'Angelo now have anything to do with his brother El, who tried to sound like Prince 10 years ago? 14. How come Moesha, who's supposed to be working at VIBE, didn't come to any of our company picnics over the summer? 15. Where's the Master P toothpaste commercial for gold fronts? 16. With the twisted rug he wore in In Too Deep, didn't Omar EDDS look like an older, skinner version of Kenan Thompson? 17, Did you know we wrote these questions with a Sean John pen? By Chris Rock, Jeff Stilson, and Ali LeRoi

QUESTIONS

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Cover Story: "In Rock We Trust"

cover and page 116: Black two-button single-breasted suit \$1,350, white cotton dress shirt \$225, and burgundy tie, all by Calvin Klein available at Calvin Klein, N.Y.C. and Saks Fifth Avenue; diamond studs by Tiffany & Co.

page 25: Midnight suede zip-front jacket \$1,395 by Calvin Klein available at Calvin Klein, N.Y.C.; white pro-stretch T-shirt \$32 by Calvin Klein Underwear available at Macy's, Bloomingdales, and Burdines department stores nationwide; diamond stud by Tiffany & Co.

page 116: On models: Black Lycra tube dres \$120 by L'Impasse available at l'Impasse Boutique, N.Y.C.; shoes by Walter Steiger; choker and earning, both by Jimmy Crystal; black tube dress with pink flowers \$39 by Le Chateau available at Le Chateau Boutique, N.Y.C.; shoes by Walter Steiger; crystal "fledd bear" pure and earnings, both by Jimmy Crystal.

page 120: Black leather shirt \$595 by cK Calvin Klein available at Bloomingdales and Burdines department stores nationwide; diamond studs by Tiffany & Co.

Table of Contents

page 28: "Tracle Spencer": Black sleeveless fur turtleneck with elastic straps on the side \$522 and black low-waits straight-leg pant with patent-leather belt \$375, all by Plein Sud available at Plein Sud Boutique, N.Y.C., Saks Fifth Avenue, and Barneys department stores nationwide.

page 32: "Brian McKnight": Charcoal flannel hidden-button jacket \$1,995 by Donna Karan available at Donna Karan stores nationwide and select Saks Fifth Avenue stores.

VIBEFashion: "The Gypsles"

pages 152-153: Pink floral silk piano shawl asymmetrical dress \$256 by Jeannine Wiest for Precious Threads available at Only She, Chicago (for more information, please call 818-990-8708); red "tea" hand-embroidered shawl \$216 by Malatesta available at Berndorf Goodman, N.Y.C. and Calypso (for more information, please go to malatex@spacelab.net); boots by Cesare Paciotti: oatmeal yest with Icelandic print \$310, black wool pant with tweed tuxedo stripe \$305, and olive scarf, all by D&G Dolce & Gabbana available at D&G New York Boutique-Soho and D&G Los Angeles Boutique-Sunset Plaza; boots by Dolce & Gabbana; khaki raincoat with Velcro straps by Prada available at Prada stores worldwide; rust striped shirt \$340 and rust wool football pant \$515, both by Jean Paul Gaultier available at select Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue department stores. and at H. Lorenzo, Los Angeles; boots by Cesare Paciotti; pink wool camisole by Fendi available at Fendi stores worldwide; red and gold tripleflared brocade skirt \$3,000 by Anand Jon available at Henri Bendel, N.Y.C., Bleu, Los Angeles, Madison & Emma Gold, Los Angeles, and Galleria Della Moda, Palm Beach, Fla.; bag by Phyllis Leibowitz.

page 154: Brown long suede jacket with leopard-print calf-hair lining \$3,440 and boots, both by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana Boutque, New York-5016; bag by Fendi; green and blue sequined slik shirt \$350 by Gene Meyer (for information, please call 212-980-010); green fur pant by Fendi available at Fendi storts worldwide; boots by Cestare Packet.

page 185: White long-sleeve button-down thirt 521, gray beaded cummerbund, black demin junas with data Nown minks cuff 1947, and boots, all by Dolec & Cabbana available at Dolec & Gabbana Boutique, New York. 50% and Dolec & Gabbana, Ball Hardour, car by Merced-e-Benz, 250 SE. 1950, and Dolec & Gabbana, Ball Hardour, car by Merced-e-Benz, 250 SE. 1970, 1970, and 1970, and

page 158: Gray embroidered and sequined sleeveless sweater \$994 by Dolce & Gabbana available at Dolce & Gabbana Boutique, New York-So-Ho; green, red, and nude beaded camisole \$7,450 and sheer beaded tulle shirt \$10,800, both by Giorgio Armani available at Giorgio Armani-Boston. San

(continued on page 204)

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Francisco, Beverly Hills, and Palm Beach, Fla.; gray long-sleeve T-shirt with felt-sequin appliqué \$200 by Gene Meyer (for information, please call 212-980-0110); boots by Miu Miu.

page 159: Navy wool cape \$924 by CoSTUME NATIONAL HOMME available at CoSTUME NATIONAL stores worldwide.

VIBEStyle: "Kinfolk"

pages 160-161: (left to ight) Reige wool-blend wester-vest \$6; by Exano validale at Di. yir, He Laik, and Waigoistonen autionwich eige long-sleeve red striped-polo-shirt \$5;0 by Mecca available at Di. yir, Liu, Paginarit the Wall, and Zebar Club town nationwich, while non-autovale chief befrends, meaken by Puna; blue and green cotton chemile sweater \$8;0 by Reys, available at the Quantum for the properties of the propertie

page 162: Blue and green cotton chenille scarf by RP55 available at Up Against the Wall and Finish Line stores nationwide.

page 163: Green cotton T-shirt \$25 by Polo Sport available at Polo Sport, N.Y.C.; white cotton T-shirt \$6 by Hanes available at retail stores nationwide.

page 164: Black cotton button-down shirt by Expand; white T-shirt \$6 by Hanes available at retail stores nationwide; orange nylon snow pant \$72 by Triple 5 Soul available at Triple 5 Soul, 290 Lafayette Street, N.Y.C.; watch by Casio.

page 165: Blue knitted pullover sweater with hood \$120 by Phat Farm available at Phat Farm, N.Y.C-SoHo.

Gear: "Take Off!"

page 1680 (left to right) Black on/son flight suit \$12x by D.N.Y. available at select Maxy's and Bloomingdales and at Arrium, N.Y.C.; boots by Nike, watch by Swatch, ivory cotton flight suit \$50b Nation. Sport Tech. available at Chungro, Foot Locker, and Foot Action stores stationwide (for more information, please call \$77.NAUTCA), boots by Timberland; cellular eargives by Nokia; Ofter flamen flight suit \$230 by Avirex available at The Avirex Store, N.Y.C. and Lox Anzeles: boots by Columbia.

Sneak Peek: Air Ascent Range Mid \$85 by Nike (for information, please go to www.nike.com).

VIBEFace: "A New Woman"

page 168: Black Lycra strapless C-minidress \$185 by OMO Norma Kamali available at OMO Norma Kamali stores nationwide (for more information, please call 800-8KAMAII, or go to www.omonormakamali.com).

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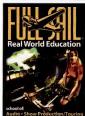
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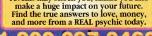






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DeWayne "NiggaWhat" Mooney: 1981-1999 Policius "NiggaWho" Tate: 1978-1999 DaKevin "NiggaRace" Means: 1979-1999

twas only a month ago that I first heard Niggs 8/hi (gr)nent Records, the astonishing debut abbum by the Inflamous hip hop group Three Niggas From Brooklyn: I was coming out of the Tunnel one night, and parked at the curb was a lime-green Hummer with solid-gold rims and three headnest-mounted TV sets bairing a bootleg video of Scarface (Universal, 1985).

Il bought I was the most ridiculous thing! I diver soon. Just than, a limit gene cassatte was showed into my hand by a main whom I took to be a member of a street team. As I turn sout, I twas Mo RigosRace (pronounced nigos-RAH-en) Inimedi—pumping, bugging, and promiting his own protect, just as a true-ping should. On my way home, I slid the tage into my car sterce. The first track, "Hay Rigor You Better Buy This or Ah Mo Whuy Yo 'Asa," was everything a ray so any should be. It was unconventional, raw, unapologett, sent thad a good beat and was easy to diancte. These There Riggs were not something!

Only after reading the next day's paper did I learn that the Three Niggas had stayed outside the Tunnel a bit too long that rateful night, and maybe they were slapped with—ranging from aggravated sexual misconduct to arson—were much more egregious than to offenses or unlawful waspons possassion and terroristic threats favored by more conventional rappers like OT bity Bastard and DMX.

Later that day, I turned on the local news to find that NiggaWhat, NiggaWho, and NiggaRace had brokan out of a police transport van in upstate New York. I immediately put the album back on for further listening. Apparently thair gangsta raps were real!

By 8 o'clock that night, the Niggas had been connard nisida a convenience store. Police were on the buildner, trying to explain to them that if they would just put down thair waspons and axit tha building, things could probably be worked out. But that cops' plass fall on deaf aars. NiggaWhat, NiggaWho, and NiggaRac and bocoms ambroided in a heated argument. Thay all opened fire, fatally wounding one another and causing setnested amagat to the store. The police never fired a shot. The next morning, Al Sharpton went on talk radio and called for an and to "police cornering." "If the group had never been cornered," boomed the Revendy, who promised to lead a march back and forth across the Brooklyn Bridge, "those Niggas would still be alivs today."

But to me, the Three Niggas From Brooklyn are still aliva. Thay live on in the beats and bruiss of those they met and moved. Three Niggas From Brooklyn were more than just a trio of angry rappers, who rode around in a lime-green Hummer. They were convicts, substance abusars, fluglives, momentary calebrities, and ignorant to a fautil

Which brings to mind the Niggas' sadly prophetic classic, "When a Nigga Shoots His Nigga," where, in his trademark slurred delivery, NiggaRace posed the eternal question, "Can a nigga get a tabla dance up in this piece?" Maybe in heaven, my brothers, maybe in heaven.

Ali LaRoi



